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*DIARY OF THE LAST EUROPEAN WHO RODE
THROUGH THE DESERT FROM BERBER TO
SUAKIN.¹*

THE fiat had gone forth—I was under sentence of death, for the doctors had declared I was dying, and had informed General Hicks that unless I quitted the Soudan I should be a dead man in three weeks. Now the fact is, my illness was due to no 'climatic cause,' but to erroneous medical treatment after being poisoned by drinking Nile water impregnated with the filth of an Egyptian camp. This occurred during the Senaar campaign—that victorious campaign in which for once, and once only, the Egyptian troops were brought to face the furious onslaught of the Arabs: I mean at the battle of Marabiah, four days south of Kawa, opposite the south-east side of the Isle of Abba, when, in solid square, our little army of 4,500 with six English officers beat back the swarms of Bagarras, led on by the desperately gallant chiefs of the Mahdi, who, like their Saracen ancestors, invariably attack *à l'arme blanche*—even though it be certain death to them.

On the evening of July 15, at the hour of sunset—one of those glorious sunsets seen only in Central Africa—I embarked, on six months' forced leave, on my dahabeeah lying off Gordon's old quarters at Khartoum, where Baron von Seckendorf, Captain Massey, and myself had been billeted for six weeks on our return from the campaign above alluded to.

Hicks Pasha, Colonel Farquhar, Colonel De Coëtlogan, Captain Massey, Captain Warner, and Captain Evans came to bid me fare-

¹ Notes from Col. the Hon. J. Colborne's (Hicks' Staff) Journal.

well. Little did I think it would be the last. I was very angry with the doctors, as I inwardly felt I was recovering, although desperately pulled down and weak. Poor Hicks's last words to me were: 'Instead of being angry with the doctors, you ought to be excessively obliged to them.'

I think so too! Vale! Vale!

The ropes are cast off, and now as I drop down the river, the nodding plume-like foliage of the palm-groves of Khartoum is silvered by the moon, that—

Rising in glorious majesty,
At length apparent Queen
Unveiled her peerless light;

burnishing with a sheen of matchless beauty the fast-flowing river, whilst here and there stand out in sharply cut relief against the sky the graceful curves of the far-sweeping yards of the Nile boats lying tranquilly at anchor. My boat's crew consisted of twelve Arabs, varying in shade from a light olive to a dark brown. Under a fresh southerly breeze we sped rapidly down the stream. The monotonous sound—something between a creak and a groan—of the sakieh¹ wheels on the bank was from time to time relieved by the sharp cry of '*Hhales!*' from the *reis*, whose crew responded by a vociferous '*Hader!*' as they slackened sail to avoid the sudden squalls which abound on the Nile.

Passing the ruins of Tamamat,² we arrived in the course of the next day at the sixth cataract,³ a place which has proved fatal to many a Nile boat. The evidences of this were apparent, and

¹ The sakieh is an apparatus in universal use for irrigation. It consists of a vertical wheel suspended over the well or cistern. Over the wheel is hung an endless chain, the lower portion of which dips into the water. To this chain are fixed a series of earthenware pitchers, which, as the wheel revolves, carry the water from the well and deposit it in a trough or spout communicating with the channel of irrigation. The motive-power is furnished by oxen, and is communicated to the vertical wheel by means of a horizontal toothed-wheel, on the principle of the bevel-wheel in modern machinery. This is turned by the ox, who plods round in a circle, attached to a long shaft. The sakieh is invariably shaded by a tree or an artificial arbour.

² Tamamat was burnt in 1844 during the slave revolt, which was to have broken out simultaneously at Senaar, Kassala, and Khartoum. The negroes who had fled were overtaken beyond Senaar and massacred.

³ This so-called cataract is an irregular rocky obstruction, a somewhat tortuous passage through which was blasted by Moon-tur, a former governor, the only upright one they ever had. Under his direction one of the highest clusters of rocks in the Nile was cleared away in two months.

among other wrecks was one of a small steamer. The river at this point is held in the rigid embrace of precipitous rocks, whose base is clad with rank vegetation, though their summits stand out weird and naked against the sky. I was forcibly reminded of my passage up with General Hicks, when our steamer grounded, and we had to haul on our cable for a painful half-hour before we got afloat.

We next reached Shendy, now a straggling village, shorn of its former importance as the head-quarters of the Shaygyeh tribe, a powerful race dwelling on the eastern bank of the Nile. Shendy, obscure as it is to-day, is noteworthy as having been a stronghold of resistance to Egyptian conquest. The flame of insurrection which burns so fiercely to-day has been long smouldering in Shendy, which was the scene of a terrible tragedy in 1821. Ismail Pasha, the son of the great Mehemet Ali, was sent by his father to collect tribute and obtain the submission of Nimr, the chief of the Shaygyehs, who had earned the *sobriquet* of the 'Tiger of Shendy,' on account of his ferocity. Ismail treated the 'Tiger' with contumely, and went so far as to strike him with the stem of his chibouk. This blow, however, seems to have struck a brilliant idea into his head. He no longer pleaded for time to meet the demands of Ismail, but promised immediate compliance, and retired from the presence of the bullying Pasha. He called together his family and the head-men of his former subjects, and represented to them the insatiable nature of the demands. They then hit upon a plan by which they thought to be relieved from all further spoliation. Camels, sheep, horses, corn, 'dourra,' and money were collected and brought to the Pasha with the greatest alacrity and cheerfulness, and, moreover, the Egyptian troops were invited by the inhabitants to partake of a banquet. Every dainty which Shendy could afford was liberally provided for the Egyptians, who washed down their repast with copious libations of Merissa.¹ The Pasha's guard and the sentries were treated with the same hospitality, and the most sumptuous food was placed before Ismail himself.

*Implentur veteris Bacchi.*²

¹ Merissa is a kind of beer in universal use in the Soudan and Upper Egypt, and is probably the same as that mentioned by Herodotus. It is made from maize (dourra), which is left to germinate in the sun and then reduced to flour by hand-mills. The flour is then converted into dough, boiled, and then left to ferment. It is a thick and unpalatable preparation.

² For *veteris Bacchi*, read Merissa.

At midnight a great cry arose. A circle of flames surrounded the whole town, while the Pasha's hut itself was in a blaze.

Up rose the Pasha at that blaze of light ;

but it was too late. In vain he endeavoured to rush through the flames—he was burnt to a cinder, together with his trusty Mamelukes who guarded him.

In the still hours of the night the inhabitants had issued forth, each bearing a flambeau, and had set fire to the piles of corn, maize, and forage which had been brought in as tribute, and which had been piled around the Pasha's hut. Many soldiers, however, dashed through the flames, escaped to their boats, and returned to Khartoum. The rest perished in that awful holocaust, and the lurid sky echoed the last cry of agony long ere morning dawned upon the smouldering heaps which told the tale of death.

The Defterdar, the Viceroy's son-in-law, had just completed the conquest of Kordofan—a conquest which had been attended by the foulest atrocities. At Bara, at El Obeid, and wherever they had marched, the 'Turkish' army had murdered, pillaged, and ravished.

When the Defterdar heard of the massacre at Shendy, he at once collected all the troops at his disposal, and marched on the town. The retribution was terrible, the revenge a fearful one.

The inhabitants of Shendy were slaughtered, irrespective of age or sex. Nimr, however, who had been informed of the Defterdar's approach, succeeded in escaping with his family to Abyssinia.¹

¹ It is to these massacres in Kordofan and Senaar that is due the undying hatred of the 'Turks' (the Soudanese call the Egyptians Turks) to this day. It is a parallel case to that of the Irish, who to this day hand down the tradition of the atrocities committed by Cromwell's army, allowing for the difference of time.

Mehemet Ali invaded Kordofan at the same time that his son Ismail invaded Nubia and Senaar. Mehemet Ali advanced by way of Dongola and the desert on Kordofan with 4,000 cavalry and infantry, nine pieces of artillery, and 1,400 Bedaween. After a terrible march of eleven days over the burning sand, they entered Kordofan at Kedjmar. Kordofan was then held by the Sultan of Darfour. His yoke was an easy one, and he governed through a viceroy, who advanced to meet the Egyptian army with what natives he could collect and his Darfour cavalry, men clad in armour and well equipped. These cavaliers, attired in plumed helmets and coats of mail, and mounted on richly-caparisoned horses, like the knights of old, turned out in gallant array eager for the approaching combat. Their departure was made the occasion of a great gala. Feasting, drinking, dancing were freely indulged in, and the women urged them on to deeds of valour in their songs. Mehemet Ali found them full of fight, and drawn up on a plain near

Shortly after leaving Shendy we came to a range of mountains, on the right bank, of a striking and fantastic formation. They have the appearance of gigantic steps, and are beautifully wooded at their base. Ten miles further on we sighted the pyramids of Meroë, which bear inscriptions containing the names of thirty of the long race of kings and queens from whom was descended Queen Candace, who held sway over the so-called island of Meroë, and who so vigorously opposed the Romans. On the most southerly of the pyramids is found the name of Meru, a king of the country, and first priest of Ammon. Close by the ruins of ancient Meroë are the villages of Maruga, Dangeleh, and Sur. An hour afterwards we approached the picturesque range of the Omarab Mountains, on the right bank, and the village of Gebel. The fertility of both banks is wonderful at and after this point, and the scenery most beautiful. The slopes are luxuriant, and in a state of high cultivation. But I missed the immense flocks of

Bara. The Egyptian guns at once opened fire. They were charged and carried with great loss by the Kordofanese, who then threw themselves upon the infantry, but in doing so were mown down by hundreds, and had to retire.

Still the battle raged without distinct success on either side. Again and again the Turkish cavalry charged and were repulsed, but at last the Bedaween surrounded the Kordofanese, whose chiefs were now slain. The guns were retaken, and were again turned against the Kordofanese, whilst the musketry made fearful havoc. A complete rout followed. Bara was taken and sacked, while the vanquished Kordofanese retired upon Obeid, which was shortly afterwards taken. The plunder was enormous, the lion's share being taken by the Defterdar. The women, stripped of their jewels, were handed over to the soldiers. The native army now made a short stand at Dar Hamz, but was again completely routed. It then broke up completely, portions of it fleeing to the villages and portions to the mountains, principally to Gebel-el-Deir, within sight of Obeid, where the Kordofanese have maintained their independence until the present time. It was to this mountain the Mahdi intended to retire with his family and worldly goods in case General Hicks were successful in sowing disaffection among his followers, or had beaten him in battle. The summit of Gebel-el-Deir is a table-land, and reservoirs serve to store up rain-water in the rainy season. No cruel monster who ever persecuted an oppressed people surpassed this Defterdar. Men were blown from guns for the slightest complaint and for the most trifling offences. I lately came across a story which, if true, shows him to have been a man of the most refined cruelty. It is customary throughout Islam, at the feast of Bairam, for the personal attendants of Pashas and high dignitaries to receive presents. The retainers of the Defterdar came to him according to custom to wish him long life and happiness, asking at the same time for the usual '*backsheesh*.' 'Certainly,' he replied, 'what would you?' 'Well,' was the answer, 'we are badly off for shoes, would your Excellency allow us to be supplied from the stores?' 'Certainly,' replied the Defterdar, 'you shall receive them to-morrow.' On the following day the servants were brought to the shoeing shed, and shod all round with iron horse-shoes!

wild-fowl we had encountered on the voyage up. They had migrated. The only sounds to be heard were the ceaseless screeching and moaning of the *sakiyehs*, at work night and day. The villages about here are very numerous, and consist of *tookoolis*, or conical-shaped huts, built of the stalks of the 'doorah' (maize).

Four days after leaving Khartoum I arrived at Berber, the point at which I was to bid farewell to the Nile, and strike off across the desert to Suakin—anything but a pleasure-trip, above all, in the month of July. Berber has been often described. The town consists of a collection of mud huts, sparsely interspersed with houses of loftier pretensions. Whilst lying on the deck of my dahabeeah, exhausted by the heat and enfeebled by dysentery, I observed the singular figure of a man watching me from the bank. He was clad in a loose *caftan*, and wore a *turboosh*, swathed in the ample folds of a silken *koufieh*, the picturesque scarf worn by the Arabs as a protection against the burning rays of the sun. His girdle was furnished with dagger and pistol, and his nether man was encased in boots and breeches. His face was tanned, and he was 'bearded like the pard.' The wearer of this incongruous costume was O'Donovan, the adventurous war correspondent of the *Daily News*, whose name has recently been before the public in connection with his plucky and desperate ride to Merv, in Central Asia.

The last time we had met was on a memorable occasion. It was at Constantinople, and O'Donovan was in durance vile in the prison of Galata Serai at Pera, whither he had been consigned on a charge of having insulted the Sultan. I well remember passing a portion of Christmas Day with him there, and at midnight I had the pleasure of assisting at his release, which was granted on the representations of Lord Dufferin. Poor O'Donovan had an instinctive love of dangerous adventures. Little did I think this was to be his last when I bade him God-speed the next day, on his way to Khartoum. He was accompanied by Mr. Power, who had come out as special artist for the *Pictorial World*, and is now acting British Consul at Khartoum. Mr. Schuver, the Dutch traveller, had been O'Donovan's companion in many a wild adventure, and it was a strange fatality which brought them together once more at Khartoum, each having wandered in lands far apart; and still stranger was it that the two should meet with their deaths at almost the same time, so shortly afterwards. Mr. Schuver was killed on the Bahr Ghazal last winter.

Before leaving Berber I dined with the *Miralai* (Colonel) of mounted Bashi-Bazouks, who was on his way to join Hicks with 800 horsemen. I will not dwell upon the nature of the feast. Turkish dinners have been often enough described. The interminable courses of sweets, alternating with savouries, and the deft practice required to detach the morsels with the right hand (to use the left would be a gross breach of etiquette), are experiences with which most people are familiar, either personally or by description. The most difficult feat is the partaking of soup. An accurate eye and a steady hand are needed to carry the contents of the shallow spoon from the common bowl in the centre of the table to the mouth. 'He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon' is equally applicable to him who dines *à la Turque*. We were a merry party, however, that night at Berber, and my last words to my host, the Bashi-Bazouk colonel, were—'We will have a good dinner at Khartoum when I come back.' Poor fellow! he was killed with the rest at the awful butchery of Melbass.

The next day, after obtaining camels with some difficulty, I started for my ride across the desert to Suakin. As I turned my back upon the tall acacias and palms of Berber, and set my face towards the desert, the town, miserable in itself, seemed invested with a relative charm; and its dusky daughters, with their scanty skirts of leather, cut into strips and modestly weighted with leaden pellets, were regarded by me as comparatively within the circle of civilisation. As an invalid I was accommodated with an *angareb*. The *angareb* is a sort of bed, which is laid transversely across the back of the camel, and is kept in its place by a wooden pin on either side passing through holes in the *angareb* itself. This queer structure was crowned by a canopy of palm-leaves and matting, which gave it the appearance of a cage. I have tried most modes of locomotion, from an elephant to a Cairo jackass, but this is immeasurably the worst. The jolting was agonising in my weak condition, and by the time I arrived at the first halting-place I was black and blue from the two pommels, between which I lay, driven as they were through the *angareb* to steady it. We left Berber at seven o'clock in the evening. The party consisted, besides myself, of an Egyptian officer, also sick, two Bashi-Bazouks, ordered by Hicks as a guard, and the Bisha-reen camel-drivers, with seven camels, three being appropriated to myself and baggage, and the remainder laden with 'dhurra' and

water. A word here as to the camel, the much belauded 'ship of the desert,' that enjoys, among those who have not come into contact with him, a much better reputation than he deserves. Patience is a virtue with which he is supposed to be pre-eminently endowed. As far as my experience goes, he is about the most impatient brute in the whole animal creation. He grumbles and swears when required to start, and grumbles and swears when he is required to stop; roars at you when you get on, roars at you when you get off, as he does when he is laden and when he is unladen. His patience is usually the result of senility. He is usually vicious, and is irremediably addicted to bolting. Neither is his intelligence sufficiently strong to allow him to distinguish noxious plants, and he is at all times a subject of anxiety to his driver on this account.

The Bishareen are a fine tall race—slender, but well-proportioned. They take especial care of their teeth, which are regular and of lustrous whiteness, which is in part due to their simple diet, and in part to a root (raki-wood) which they chew perpetually. Their dress is scanty, but graceful. It consists of a piece of white linen wound about the waist and thrown over the shoulder. Each man carries a long straight sword and a shield of small dimensions, made of hippopotamus or rhinoceros' hide. A spear is carried in the right hand. The Bishareen, in common with the rest of the Arab tribes in the Eastern Soudan, take great personal pride in their hair. A considerable portion of their lives is spent in its adornment. I doubt whether a Parisian *coiffeur* would care to take lessons in his *métier* from these children of the desert, but he would be puzzled to imitate them. The hair is jet-black, coarse, wiry, and abundant. It is parted in a horizontal line round the head, the parting passing close above the ears; the hair above this line is dressed perpendicularly and looks like a mop. Below it is plaited and frizzed, and sticks out over the neck and shoulders like the roof of a pent-house, doubtless affording great protection to the back of the neck from the rays of the sun. The whole is stiffened with grease, and when the Bishareen has newly performed his toilet and grease is plentiful, his sable locks assume the snowy whiteness of those of Jeames. The sun melts the grease, which drips on to the back and shoulders, forming a deposit by no means savouring of the conventional spicy odours of 'Araby the Blest.' A long skewer or hairpin transfixes this wonderful *coiffure*, and serves the double

purpose of a comb and a weapon used in the chase of the *ferce natura*, which abound in its immediate vicinity.

These people are very strict in the observance of the hours of prayer prescribed by the religion of Islam. They are Moslems of the Malikee rite, like the rest of the Soudanese. They perform their ablutions by means of sand in lieu of water—a substitute sanctioned, I believe, by the Prophet, in cases where water is not to be had. I never saw them smoke, but they are addicted to snuff, which they carry in round ball-shaped boxes. Their knives are fastened above the left elbow. The Bishareen women are comely, barefooted and bareheaded, and clad in a simple cotton gown. The tribe consists of between 100,000 and 150,000 souls. Their sheik is Bashi Moussa (Moses). They are divided into twenty-two sub-tribes, the most important of which is the El Kelamab. They are governed by numerous sub-sheiks. The rule is cruel, arbitrary, and oppressive. A tribute of about 3,000*l.* per annum is extracted from them. They of course detest the Egyptian Government, and their now open hostility has long been smouldering in secret. They occupy an ill-defined district between the 19th and 20th parallels of latitude in the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, and pride themselves on the possession of their *hygeens*, or well-bred swift dromedaries.

We encamped for the night at Bir Mahobé, after three hours' march east-north-east from Berber. At this place there is a large well, riveted with stone. Here we took in a supply of water, for between this point and O-Bâk there is not a drop. The next morning we entered the howling wilderness. Our way lay across a barren plain of reddish sand and grit; the pale sickly yellowish-grey weeds became more sparse and soon disappeared. These had been preceded by scanty patches of reed-grass, and occasional thorny mimosa. Now not a blade of vegetation was to be seen. We halted at a point where this plain merges into a bewildering maze of shifting sand-hills, utterly desolate. I was glad to quit my *angareb* and the back of my camel, as I had been in torture the whole day, and the soft sand formed a delightful bed. So thankful was I to be rid of the nauseous jolting that I looked with kindly eyes even on this unlovely spot—unlovely, perhaps, but sublime and impressive as stupendous loneliness and vast space could make it. The sunsets of the African desert are never to be forgotten. I have seen the sun sink to rest in many latitudes and on most meridians, but have never been so awed by

the grandeur of the sweet hour as in the silent solitude of the desert. It is more striking than a sunset at sea; the sense of loneliness is deeper, and the rich golden tones of the undulating plain of sand and the sullen glow and cool violet shadows of the wild gaunt mountains around are awe-inspiring.

The next morning we began the passage of the loose sand-dunes above-mentioned, the most painful and perilous portion of the two hundred and eighty miles of desert between Berber and the Red Sea. The camels laboured through the yielding sand, sinking under their feet at every step. On this day the mirage was intensely real. Before me lay a lake, its blue waters laughing in the sun, studded with gem-like islets clad with verdure, and bordered by castles, high turrets, and battlements, and again by gleaming villages and smiling hamlets—the whole scene fairy-like in its beauty, and a painful contrast to the arid sand and fierce heat and consuming thirst from which I was suffering. It is in vain that one rubs one's eyes and seeks to disabuse one's self of the illusion. The thing is there, undeniable, apparently solid and tangible; you know it is mocking you, like an *ignis fatuus*, but the most accurate knowledge of the physical laws which govern the phenomenon will not brush it away from the retina. There is small wonder that the ignorant and inexperienced should have frequently yielded to the delusion. Life is the price paid for such a mistake. Some years ago a company of soldiers perished from thirst in this region. Disregarding the warning of their guides, the poor fellows, fresh from Egypt, and mad with thirst, broke from the ranks and rushed towards the seeming lakes of transparent water which was presented to their eyes on all sides. They pressed on eagerly towards the ever-receding phantasm, and one by one fell prostrate to leave their bones to bleach on the sand. On another occasion a detachment was sent across the desert to Berber on its way to Khartoum. The soldiers, refusing to be checked by the guides, consumed all their water when in sight of the mountains of El-Bok, confident of their ability to reach the well. The heat was intense. The men became prostrate, and in a few hours died one by one in horrible agony. The Arabs call the mirage *bahr esh sheitan*—‘the devil's sea.’

Later in the day the sky assumed a greyish tint, then a deep yellow, and the sun became darkened and appeared as a blood-red disk. I perceived a cloud of sand rolling up from the west. With

a roar it was upon us, and I had to bury my face in my *burnous*¹ to shield it from the cutting particles of sand. The camels floundered about, blind and helpless; the Arabs howled and cried 'Abd-à-alah;' the whole caravan was in a state of confusion. What track there had been previously was obliterated. The drivers had lost their way, and there was the ugly fact of our water being very limited in quantity; and water in the desert means life. Moreover, my *angareb* slid off, and I was precipitated to the earth, miraculously escaping anything worse than a mere shaking. The distance between a camel's hump and his feet is a respectable one. Afterwards, I was placed for additional security between two camels, slung athwart; but one was rather smaller than the other—they, therefore, did not, strictly speaking, keep step. The result was the most excruciating movement ever experienced, which, combined with the bruises and abrasions from the recent fall, and a frame weakened by dysentery and an African climate, together with forebodings as to our probable fate if we did not strike the track again, produced a frame of mind far removed from that of Job's. We rested for the night, or rather a portion of it, in the midst of these unstable sands, and I was devoutly thankful to find my camel treading on firmer ground next day when we came to a plain of a similar nature to that we had passed previous to wading through the mounds of sand. But at length the track is hit off and at last O-Bâk is reached. This small oasis has about thirty wells. The water is brackish and barely drinkable. The wells are small shafts sunk in the sand, with wooden curbing. The wells are constantly filling, and new ones being sunk. Before reaching this station we passed many graves of those who had perished in the desert. They were marked by borders of stones. Simple memorials of simple lives and lonely deaths. Before reaching O-Bâk we passed a strange block of granite, the base of which is worn by the sand so that it is pear-shaped. This well-known land-mark is known as Abou-Odfa. Some few miles farther on we passed another mass, weird and solitary.

We had an hour's sand-wading after leaving O-Bâk before entering on the gravelly plain, equally devoid of wood and water, but much less painful to traverse. This plain gradually narrows towards its eastern extremity, where it is called Wadi-ed-Derûk. After a halt here we toiled on; the mountain Jebel Gurrât looming

¹ A scarf.

in the distance to our right. Before reaching this point we passed through the gloomy valley of Berud. Here I caught a glimpse of some asses—graceful, agile creatures, with grey bodies and white bellies, that bounded away at our approach. Whether they had been originally tame and had gone like ‘wild asses into the wilderness,’ or were naturally wild, I know not. These creatures were, with the exception of a few antelopes, many vultures, and some sand grouse near one of the wells, the only four-footed and winged denizens of this dreary desert that I saw on the journey. I beg his pardon; I met a lonely hare. ‘What doth he here?’ I thought. Not feeding, certainly; as he bounded away over heaps of stones, among which it would have puzzled the most hungry puss to have snatched a mouthful. I forgot, too, the beautiful little ringdoves among the mimosa; sisters and brothers to those of Miss Flo’s or Miss Daisy’s; the doves one hears cooing in their aviary on a bright spring morning when residing at an English country-house. The way now pointed east by north through a narrow valley enclosed by low hills strewn with boulders of inky blackness. The scene was wild, grotesque, and forbidding. My Bashi-Bazouks had not received rations for the journey, and I had shared the remnant of provisions which remained between them and myself. The consequence was that I was reduced to a diet of dates, some salt bacon, and two tins of corned beef, and the brackish water we obtained at O-Bâk. The consuming thirst which seized me was augmented by this *régime*, and I looked forward with intense longing to our arrival at Ariab, where we might obtain good water and the delicious goat’s milk. We taxed our camels to the utmost, and after a short rest pushed on through the night. We reached Ariab at six o’clock in the morning. A skin of milk was brought to me by my plucky and faithful Bashi-Bazouks. I say brought; how they got it I cannot say. They said they had not paid for it. I doubt now whether it was a *gift*; for these Arabs have a superstition that if they sell milk there will be a curse on them, the cattle will die, and all sorts of plagues will be on them. I did not know this then. Sir Samuel Baker has just told me this. But how I enjoyed that milk no tongue can tell! Refreshed, I fell asleep after the weary march. I was awakened from this fortifying siesta by the gentle chatter of female voices around my tent. The voice of the fairer half of creation has a *cachet* of its own all the world over, and I could have imagined myself in a London drawing-room, at

a five o'clock tea, half awake as I was. The fair daughters of the desert had congregated around the tent of the stranger out of sheer curiosity and love of the strange—'only this and nothing more.' Ariab is the prettiest spot in this desert, and, relatively, it may be termed lovely. There are three large well-constructed wells containing an abundant supply of clear water. The valley runs north-east and south-west. It is about five miles long and two wide. There is grazing for camels and goats, and some large acacias overhang the wells. There is an Arab settlement here. Ariab woos the nomad from his wandering instinct. For my part, weak and ill and burnt as I was, I wished I could have stayed here a month. Had I done so, however, I should have to become either a corpse or a mussulman; loathsome either choice. From two to four in the afternoon the heat in the desert is overpowering. I found an excellent recipe, which I do not venture to recommend, however, for other climes. I wrapped myself in a sheet, and got my Dinka servant to pour water over me, and cooled myself as one does a bottle of champagne with a wet cloth, though I did not bury myself up in a drift. The sensation was most delicious. I laughed at the torrid heat. The evaporation being so rapid, one at once feels deliciously cool; as for rheumatism, it is nonplussed. The heat in the afterpart of the day is appalling; one can hardly breathe. It is a struggle for existence. Every now and then you seem to receive a fierce blast from a furnace. I have not read in the numerous accounts I have seen of anyone crossing the desert in July. It is not an experience which one would indulge in for the sake of pleasure. All I can say is that the few travellers whose winter experiences of the desert have been recorded will have to try a July transit before they know what the desert really can do in the way of grilling.

When we left the oasis of Ariab we pursued a devious course between low rocky hills, which closed in on us until they bounded the narrow valley called Wadi Yunga. The granite boulders were here more bold, and hemmed us in more closely, and for ten miles we threaded our way through them, halting on a bare rocky plain broad and level, with a hard gravelly soil. As we issued from the ravine we passed in two and threes gentlemen in black with long spears strolling along by moonlight. Some of them asked me for tobacco, being 'just out' of that commodity; but our guide and camel-drivers were thrown into a great state of mind by these apparitions, and on arriving at the usual halting-place on the plain

entreated me to go on, urging that the gentlemen we had passed would certainly murder us that night. I could not consider the fact of being asked for tobacco indicating any intention of murder, remembering that one often meets a gentleman in London who is 'just out of tobacco,' so I positively refused to go without my night's rest. The drivers then entreated me to fire off my rifle several times as a caution; to this waste of ammunition I also demurred. They then requested me to pitch my tent in their middle; but not liking the effluvia of camels and their drivers, I declined this request also, pitching my tent at least fifty yards distant from the halted caravan. But they gradually encircled my domicile, and sat up all night singing and talking loud—to make the supposed enemy afraid to attack.

But they were more or less right in their fears; these naked men with their spears and shields were on the war path—on towards the fore-doomed Sincat—yet they never attempted to touch me, although I had only two unarmed attendants with me and a few camel-drivers. There is a nobility about the bearing of these chivalrous nomads that one respects and admires.

Our camping-ground was under a low hill to our right; we found a well and a spring here, with fairly good water. This spot marks the line of demarcation between the Bishareen and the Hadendowa tribes. The latter are richer and more powerful, they possess cattle as well as camels, and grow *dhurra* and even cotton in the districts near Kassala. Some people have found a resemblance between them and the Jews, and think they are Jews in fact; I only find one point in common—a strong desire to grasp other people's property. We left the low hill and the spring called Roah, and wound among low rocky spurs on our way to Kokreb, fourteen and a half miles from Roah. After a long desert ride Kokreb, which possesses a delightful gushing spring and some vegetation, seems an Eden. During the whole journey we had been gradually ascending, and had now attained an altitude of 2,300 feet. Leaving Kokreb we passed over a range of wildly beautiful hills. The tortuous pass debouches into a barren, treeless valley, strewn with fragments of porphyry and trap, in wild but picturesque confusion. One might well imagine that the Titans had been playing at bowls with the rocks, or that his Satanic majesty had given a dance to a select number of friends at this spot. It is a weird-like scene indeed! We halted at Ahab, or O-Habdl. Beyond this comes a plain, a tract of rocky soil alternating with

strips of thin soil, supporting coarse and scanty herbage. The spurs of the low rocky hills to the north jut into the plain, which is thinly studded with stunted mimosa, and uncouth, unearthly-looking dragon-trees (*dracænæ*). Here, too, we came across the Caraib, with its wing-like branches prickly and jagged, a tree strangely in keeping with its savage habitat. Leaving the plain we entered a narrow valley running north-east and then trending east. This brought us in a couple of hours to the watershed of the Nile and the Red Sea, the highest point on the road, 2,870 feet above the sea.

The valley contracts into a defile before reaching Haratri, where we found two wells of good water, and encamped. The rocks here start up like gigantic gaunt grim idols all around. Granite porphyry and greenstone crop up along the whole route. A strange and hitherto unexplained phenomenon exists in connection with the rocks in this desert. Whatever may be their colour they are uniformly covered with a black coating, which gives them a sombre and forbidding appearance, adding to the solemn impressiveness of the scene—indescribably grand is this mountain route. Soon after quitting Haratri we entered a weird region, where the huge black boulders were strewn around in the wildest confusion. Lateral ravines gave us glimpses of a chaotic labyrinth of rocks of fantastic form piled one upon another. Huge fragments were sown broadcast everywhere. The place might have served for a painter to represent the battle-ground of Milton's angels and the hosts of Lucifer. The whole scene had an 'eerie' and unearthly aspect. The most daring conceptions of Martin or Gustave Doré fail to give an adequate idea of it, though it recalled to me some of the latter's illustrations to Dante's 'Inferno.'

A fearful storm came down upon us as we were traversing this district. It was suddenly on us. The flashes were incessant, and 'the lightning ran along the ground' and darted among the rocks, illuminating the sinister-looking masses with awful brilliancy. One could realise one of the plagues of Egypt, as the rain came down in sheets; amid the rush of water and the rolling of the thunder arose the wild cry of the Bishareen, 'Ab-dallah.' Abdallah was a sheik, who is held in great veneration, and is, in fact, a sort of patron saint who is constantly appealed to during journeys and in times of peril. It is a monotonous long-drawn cry. I have heard it explained as an invocation to the spirit of the storm.

Eight hours after leaving Haratri we arrived at O-Oched, a charming spot, with water thirty inches below the soil. The road

then followed shallow ravines bordered by low rocky ridges, debouching on to a wide open plain. This terminates in low sandy hills, between the slopes of which our camels plodded wearily. This valley affords substance to a few stunted trees. We camped by two wells, very shallow, but affording a supply of fair water. After this came another ravine beyond, which we traversed, the crest of a low spur plentifully sprinkled with low bushes. Descending this we again wound through a labyrinth of defiles. The road now ran due east in a steady descent, which told me that we were surely approaching the longed-for goal—the shores of the Red Sea. We halted once more on the edge of a small plain surrounded by low hills. The sunrise over the irregular serrated summits of these hills was exceedingly beautiful. We left the plain and crossed more rocky spurs, rising into bare hills on our right, intersected by numerous ravines. After another rest we started for Bir-Handuk. The country bore the same characteristics—bare Khors and ranges of hills, then a plain where the mimosa bushes were more dense than hitherto.

We arrived at Bir-Handuk about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. I pitched my tent under a tree, about a hundred yards from the wells. A group of Hadendowa Arabs stood around them. There were about thirty of them, and I paid no attention to them at the time. Presently my camel-drivers came running to me and said the Hadendowa refused to let them approach the wells. I sent a tall, stalwart negro (originally a Dinka slave), still in my service, to tell them I was an officer in the service of the Government. This had no effect. I could have travelled the intervening twelve miles between this place and Suakin, but illness and fatigue are not conducive to patience—one is made irritable—and I determined to have water at any cost; being annoyed at the impudence of the refusal, I gave my Bashi-Bazouks a revolver each, and asked them if they would stand by me. They responded with alacrity. I again sent my servant to say to the Arabs that I should at once open fire if they did not clear out, pointing my rifle at the same time. After some hesitation they moved off sulkily, and we were able to assuage our thirst. Knowing nothing of the disposition of these tribes I was unable to account for this hostile demonstration. Four days afterwards Sincat was attacked, and the revolt had begun. This was one of the premonitory drops which ushered in the storm. Bir-Handuk consists of five shallow wells of poor water, at the foot of a low spur

of the Waratab range of hills. It was near this spot that the column sent to relieve Sincat were cut to pieces.

I was now only twelve miles from Suakin, and eagerly did I look for the first glimpse of the sea, as we toiled under a burning sun, over a plain scattered with black hornblende rocks. At length we passed over the last spur, and from its summit I gazed upon the blue vapour-like curtain of the ocean, shimmering in the heated atmosphere on the horizon. I cried, *Θάλασσα! Θάλασσα!* I believe as fervently as any one of Xenophon's ten thousand when they sighted the Euxine.

The white, coral-built town of Suakin lay like a pearl below me. Three hours more of camel-riding, first down torrent-beds, bearing witness to the fury of the floods which pour from these mountains once or twice in a year, and then over a hard pebbly plain, patched and streaked here and there with sand, and covered with rank grass and stunted mimosa bushes, brought us to the shore. A few minutes more and we had passed the causeway which connects the island-built town with the mainland. I bade farewell to my *hygeen*. Notwithstanding the inward maledictions I had bestowed upon him for jolting and bumping to which he had subjected me, I felt some regret at parting. Poor brute! He had carried me faithfully through the burning waste under a July sun. I tried to pat him, but unbending in his demeanour he merely gave a savage growl of resentment. I put it down to liver, and in that climate a short temper is easily pardoned.

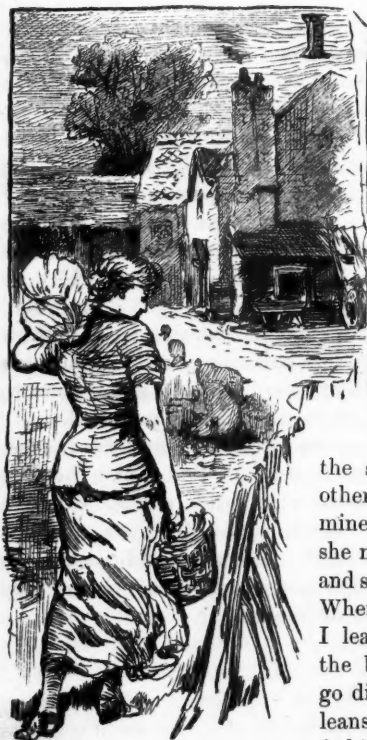
I little thought as I steamed out of Suakin that I was the last European to travel along the road between Berber and the Red Sea, that within a few short months the army, which I expected shortly to rejoin, would have ceased to exist, that the ground I had trodden would be reddened with blood, and that British troops would be engaged in a campaign and waging battle on the very spot from which I looked down on Suakin.

MARGERY OF QUETHER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING.'

IN TWO PARTS.

II.



I LEFT Brinsabatch that morning with great reluctance, and all the time of divine service I was thinking far more of old Margery than of young Margaret, as I ought—and I do not mind confessing my fault openly. My seat is a little forward of the Quether pew on the other side. Usually, when standing for the psalms and hymns, I stand sideways, that the light may fall on my book, and look over the top at Margaret, who does

the same; but as she is on the other side and the window opposite mine, she turns towards me that she may get the light on her print, and so our eyes are always meeting. When the parson is praying to us, I lean forward with my head on the book board, and so my eyes go diagonally backward, Margaret leans her head in an opposite fashion, and so her eyes go diagonally

ally forward, and our eyes are always meeting in the prayers, as in the psalms. During the sermon I am obliged to turn round on my seat, as I am hard of hearing in my right ear, owing to a cricket ball having hit it when I was at the Tavistock Grammar

School. Margaret always somehow has her bonnet string over her left ear, so she is forced to sit roundabout on her seat and expose the hearing ear to the preacher, and so it always comes about that during the sermon our eyes are meeting. This Christmas Day it was other with me; I could think of nothing but my poor little old Margery in her bassinet by the fire, and I kept on wondering whether she would wake up in my absence and fret for want of me. Then I had all through the sermon a pricking feeling in my chest—I suppose where her tooth and nails had held so tight—and I was restless and uncomfortable to be back at Brinsabatch.

After service, as I was shaking hands all round, feeling eager to get it over and be off, Farmer Palmer said to me, 'Come home to Quether with us, Rosedhu, and eat your Christmas dinner there. We are old friends and hope to be closer friends in time than we are now. I don't like, nor does Margaret here, to think of you sitting lonely down to your meal on Christmas Day. There is a knife and fork laid ready for you, and I will take no refusal.'

I made a lame sort of excuse. I said I was unwell.

'That is true enough,' said Palmer; 'you don't look yourself at all to-day, and Margaret is uneasy about you. Your face is white, your hand shakes, and you look older by some years than when I last saw you. When was that?'

'Sunday, father,' said Margaret with a sigh.

I assured them that I was too indisposed to accept their kind invitation, and I saw that they believed me. Margaret's brown eyes were fixed anxiously and intently on me. I had been up all night, and much worried, that was why I looked older and unwell, but I only said by way of explanation to Palmer, the one magical word 'liver.' When you say that word every man understands you. It touches his heart at once.

As I walked home every person I passed and spoke to said, 'How oldened you are!' or 'How ill you look!' or 'Why, surely that baint you, Mr. George, looking nigher forty than twenty.'

I wish Mr. Palmer would not try to thrust Margaret on me. Margaret invites me to dinner. Margaret is concerned at my looks. Margaret remembers when last we met. That is all hyperbola and figure and flower of speech, and means in plain English, I want you to take my eldest daughter off my hands, but I am not going to give more than a trifle with her.

I never was more pleased than on this occasion when I got home again. I unlocked my parlour door, and ran in and up to

the clothes basket, and cried in a sort of fond foolish rapture, 'Bless it! bless it!'

The little old woman opened her eyes—they were not clouded with cataract; that must have been a fancy of mine before; she saw me and smiled, and made a sort of crowing noise in her throat. I stooped over to kiss her, when—click! in an instant she had fastened herself on me, and driven her tooth into my chest, and grabbed me with her hands, so that I was held as in a vice. To wrench her off would have been impossible. I believe if torn away the hands would have held to me still, and the arms come off at the wrists. I know that when a ferret fastens on a rabbit you may kill the beast before he will let go, unless you nip his hind foot; then he opens his mouth to squeal, and loosens his grip to defend himself. I did not think of this at the time, or I might have called in someone to pinch Margery's foot; but I doubt, even if I had remembered this, whether I should have had recourse to this expedient. I did not care to have my situation discussed; moreover, I was conscious of a soothing sensation all the time Margery was fast. Besides, I knew by this time that when the little old woman had had enough she would drop off, just as a leech does when full. I would not have you suppose that Margery was sucking my blood. Nothing of the sort; that is, not grossly in the manner of a leech. But she really did, in some marvellous manner to me quite inexplicable, extract life and health, the blood from my veins and the marrow from my bones, and assimilate them herself.

Presently she fell off, as I knew she would when satisfied, and lay in my lap, across my knees. She looked up at me with a smile that had something really pleasant in it. She was positively taller, her skin fresher, her eye clearer than before; her eyelashes were gray, not snowy; and there was actually a down of grey hairs covering her poll, like the feathers on a cockatoo. I wrapped a blanket round her, and was about to replace it in the basket, when I found, to my surprise, that it would cramp her limbs; she could not kick out of it. So I got a drawer out of my bureau, fitted it up with pillows, and laid her in that.

I really do think there is something taking about her expression. When you consider her age, she gave wonderfully little trouble. At first it was strange to me to have to do with this sort of little creature—it was my first and only—but I saw that I should soon get used to it. In the afternoon I employed myself in making a pair of rockers, which I adjusted to the drawer, and by this means

converted it into a very tolerable cradle. I am handy at carpentering. Indeed there are not many things which I cannot do when put to it. When the emergency arose, as the reader will see, I became really a superior nurse, without any training or experience. Indeed, I feel confident that in the event of this Radical Gladstone-Chamberlain-Bradlaugh Government altering the land laws and robbing me of Brinsabatch, I could always earn my living as a nurse; I could take a baby from the month, if not earlier, or a person of advanced age lapsed into second childhood. Never before have I taken in hand the tools of literature, and yet, I venture to say that—well! there are idiots in the world who don't know the qualities of a cow, and to whom a sample of wheat is submitted in vain. Such persons are welcome to form what opinion they like of my literary style. Their opinion is of no value whatever to me. There is no veneer in my work, it is sterling. There is no padding, as it is called; my literary execution is substantial and thorough as were the rockers I put on thickly (I mean, that there) cradle. The rockers were not put on many days before they were needed. Old Margery became very restless at night, and she would not let me be long out of the house by day. She was cutting her teeth. The back teeth are terribly trying to babies—they have fits sometimes and big heads and water on the brain, all through the molars. If it be so with an infant of a few months, just consider what it must be with an old woman in her three-hundredth year, or thereabouts! I bore with her very patiently, but broken rest is trying to a man. Besides, about the same time I suffered badly in my jaws, for my teeth, which were formerly perfectly sound, began to decay, break off, and fall out. I may say, approximately, that as Margery cut a tooth I lost one; also that, as her hair grew and darkened, mine came out or turned grey. Moreover, as her eye cleared mine became dim, and as her spirits rose mine became despondent.

In this way, weeks, and even months, passed. It really was a pretty sight to see the havoc of ages repaired in the person of Margery; the sight would have been one of unalloyed delight, had not the recovery been effected at my expense. The colour came back into her cheek as it left my once so florid complexion; she filled out as I shrivelled up, she grew tall as I collapsed; the drawer would now no longer contain her, and a bed was made for her by the fire in the parlour. I noticed a gradual change in the tenour of her talk, as she grew younger. At first she could think

and speak of nothing but her ailings, but after, she took to talking scandal, bitter and venomous, of neighbours, that is, of neighbours dead and dropped to dust, whose very tombstones are weathered so as to be illegible. Little by little her talk became less virulent, and softened into harmless prattle, and was all about the things of the farm and house. She was a first-rate worker. I was glad she took such an interest in the farm; she brisked about and saw to everything. I was not able now to get about as much as I might have liked, as I suffered much from rheumatism and bronchitis. Neighbours came to see me, and all were in the same tale, that I was becoming an old man before my time, that the change in me was something unprecedented and unaccountable. I could not walk without a stick. I stooped. My hair was thin and grey, my limbs so shrunken that my clothes hung on me as on a scarecrow. I was advised to see a doctor; that is—everyone had a special doctor who was sure to cure me; one said I must go to Dr. Budd at North Tawton, and another to Dr. Hingston at Plymouth, and one to this and one to that; they would have sent me flying over the county consulting doctors, and varying them every week. Some said—and I soon found that was the prevailing opinion—that I was bewitched, and advised me strongly to consult the white witch either in Exeter or Plymouth. I turned a deaf ear to them all. I wanted no doctors. I needed no white witch. I knew well enough what ailed me. I never now went up Brent Tor to church. Dear life! I could not have climbed such a height if I had wished it! My poor old bones ached at the very thought, and my back was nigh broken when I walked through the shippen one day to the linneye (cattle shed). Besides, I had grown terribly short of wind, and I had such a rattling on my chest. I almost choked of a night. That was the bronchitis, and when I coughed it shook me pretty well to pieces.

So time passed, and I knew that I was sinking slowly and surely into my grave; there was no real complaint on me to kill me. I was breaking up of old age, and yet was no more than three and twenty. Everyone said I looked as if I was over ninety years. If I could see the hundred, it would be something to be proud of before I was four and twenty. One thought troubled me sorely. Whatever would become of Brinsabatch without a Rosedhu in it? I should die without leaving a lineal descendant in the male line. It would go out of the family. I had not a relation in the world. We Rosedhus always marry late in life,

and never have large families. I was the single thread on which the possible Rosedhu posterity depended. I believe that an aunt had once married, and had a lot of children, but she was never named in the family. It was tantamount to a loss of character in Rosedhu eyes. I did not even know her married name. She was dead; but her issue no doubt remained, though I knew nothing of them. They, I suppose would inherit. I found as I grew older that this fretted me more and more. I would soon pass beyond the grave into the world of spirits, and I knew, the



moment I turned up there, that all the Rosedhus would be down on me for not having left male issue to inherit Brinsabatch, each, with intolerable self-assurance, setting himself up before me as an example I ought to have copied. As if, under my peculiar circumstances, I could help myself. The only one of my ancestors with whom I should be able to exchange words would be the George Rosedhu who had married Mary Cake. I could cast it in his teeth that had he been faithful to his first love, this disastrous contingency would not have occurred.

'Ah!' said I, in a fit of spleen, 'it is all very well of you,

Margery, to go about the house singing. What is to become of the Rosedhus? To whom will Brinsabatch fall? You have drawn all the flush and health out of me and made yourself young at my charge,—but I get nothing thereby.'

'I will nurse you in your decrepitude, dearest George,' she answered, and a dimple came in her rosy cheek, the prettiest twinkle in her laughing blue eye. Upon my word she was a bonny buxom wench, and it would have been a delight to be in the house with her, had I been younger. 'Now I could only gaze on her charms despairingly from afar off, as Moses looked on the Promised Land from Pisgah. What a worker she was, moreover! What a manager! What an organiser! What a housekeeper, cook, dairywoman, rolled into one! Never was the house so neat the linen so cared for, the brass pans so scoured, the butter so sweet, the dairy so clean. She had been brought up in the old-fashioned, hard-working, sensible ways of a farm in the reign of Good Queen Bess. In our days, the women are all infected with your Gladstone-Chamberlain topsy-turveyism, and farmers' daughters play the piano and murder French, and farmers' wives read Miss Braddon and Ouida and neglect the cows. Her ways were a surprise to all on the estate. The men and the maids had never seen anything like it. Folks could not make Margery out, who she was, and where I had picked her up. Nobody seemed to belong to her; she had never been seen before, and yet she knew the names of every tor, and hamlet, and coombe, and moor, as if she had been reared there. But though she knew the places, she did not know the people. She spoke of the Tremaines of Cullacombe, whereas the family had left that house two hundred years ago, and were settled at Sydenham. She talked of the Doidges of Hurditch, a family that had been gone at least a hundred years. Kilworthy, she supposed, was still tenanted by the Glanvilles, whereas that race is extinct, and the place belongs to the Duke of Bedford, who has turned it into a farm. On the other hand, what was curious was, that Margery hit right now and then on the names of some of the labouring poor; she would salute a man by his right Christian and surname, because he was exactly like an ancestor some two hundred and fifty years ago. Though the great families have migrated or disappeared, the poor have stuck to their native villages, and reproduce from century to century the same faces, the same prejudices, the same characteristics. They are almost as unchangeable as the hills.

As I have said, Margery was a puzzle to everyone, and because a puzzle, the workmen and girls looked on her with suspicion. They resented the close way in which they were kept to their work and the rigid supervision exercised over them. Solomon Davy, the clerk, alone suspected who she was. He called several times to see me, and looked hard at me, with an uneasy manner, and seemed as though he wanted to ask me something, but lacked the courage to do so. Margery is always pleasant to Solomon, she knew the Davys that went before him, but he gives her a wide berth; he never lets her come within arm's reach of him. She feels it, I am sure, by her manner; but she is too good-hearted to remark on it.

I cannot deny that she was goodness and attention itself to me, and that I was fond of her. Just as a mother idolises her baby that draws all its life and growth from her, so was it with me. I begrudged her none of her youth and beauty; I took a sort of motherly pride in her growth and the development of her charms, and for precisely the same reason—they were all drawn out of me.

One day Margery announced that she intended to marry me, and told me I must be prepared to stir my old stumps and go to church with her. She explained her reason candidly to me. She knew that I had a clear business head, and so she consulted me on the subject, which was flattering, and I should have felt more grateful had I not almost reached a condition past acute feeling. She told me that she would nurse me till I expired in her arms, and then, as my widow, would have Brinsabatch. This would secure her future, for with her renewed youth and with her handsome estate she could always command suitors and secure a second husband, from whom she could extract sufficient life and health to maintain her in the bloom of youth. When he was exhausted and withered up and dead, she could obtain a third, and so on *ad infinitum*. She objected to being again consigned to mummification in the tower of Brent Tor Church, and this was the simplest and most straightforward solution to her peculiar difficulties. The plan suggested was feasible, and, from her point of view, admirable. I was now so shattered mentally and physically that I was in no condition to raise an objection. Indeed, I had no objection to raise. I freely, willingly submitted to her proposal. She exercised no undue compulsion on me; she appealed to my reason, and my reason, as far as it remained, told me that her plan was sensible, and in every

way worthy of her. She was a handsome woman, with a fine head of brown hair, and the brightest, wickedest, merriest pair of blue eyes. As for her cheeks—quarantines were nothing to them. A man in the prime of life would be proud to have such a woman as his wife, and her selection of me was, in its way, complimentary, even though I knew that I was taken for the sake of Brinsabatch.

So I consented, and she herself took the banns to the clerk. Solomon opened his eyes when she told him her purpose, moved uneasily on his seat, and scratched his head. He hardly knew what to make of it. He came to see me, and looked inquiringly at me, but I had one of my fits of coughing on me. When I was sufficiently recovered to speak, I told Solomon how impatient I was for my wedding-day to arrive, and how kind and excellent a nurse Margery was to me. He went away puzzled, and rubbing his forehead. I made but one stipulation with respect to my wedding, that was, that I should be conveyed to the foot of Brent Tor in a spring-cart, laid on straw, and thence be conveyed up the hill to the altar by four strong men, in a litter, laid upon a feather-bed, and with hot bottles at my feet and sides. I was entirely incapable of walking.

This was at the beginning of November. Consequently ten months had elapsed since that fatal Christmas Eve on which I had made the acquaintance of Margery of Quether. So the banns were read on the first Sunday in the month at the afternoon service, there being no service that day in the morning in the little church. The banns were published between George Rosedhu, of Brinsabatch, bachelor, and Margaret Palmer, of Quether, spinster. If anyone knew any just cause or impediment why these two should not be joined together in holy matrimony, they were now to declare it. That was the first time of asking.

A pretty sensation the reading of these banns caused. Farmer Palmer's face turned as mottled as brawn, and Miss Palmer blushed as red as a rose and buried her face in her hymn-book. My old Margery had overshot her mark, as the sequel proved. She had not reckoned with young Margaret, her great, great, great, great grand-niece.

When public worship was concluded, Mr. Palmer and his daughter, instead of directing their steps homeward towards Quether, where tea was awaiting them, walked in the opposite direction, and descended on Brinsabatch, to know of me what was meant by the banns—sober earnest or a silly joke.

Margery was not at home. She always frequented S. Mary Tavy church, because she had a dislike to Brent Tor; it was associated in her mind with two centuries of chilling and repellant associations. Margery was a regular church-goer. That was part of her bringing up. In her young days, if anyone missed church, he was fined a shilling, and if he did not take the sacrament, was whipped at the cart-tail. These penalties are no longer exacted; nevertheless, Margery is punctual in her attendance. Such is the force of a habit early acquired.

Thus it came about that Farmer Palmer and his daughter arrived at Brinsabatch before Margery had returned from church. I am sorry that my hand is not expert at describing things which I neither saw nor heard accurately. I have no imagination, which is a delusive faculty leading to serious error. Palmer and his daughter were attended by Solomon Davy, who I believe endeavoured to explain the situation to them and told them who Margery really was. I had become so dull of hearing, and so cataracted in eye, that I was unable to understand all that went on, and to follow and take part in the somewhat heated and animated conversation. If, like a modern writer of fiction, I were to give the whole of what was said, with description of the attitudes assumed, the inflections of the voices, and the degrees of colour that mantled the several cheeks, I might make my narrative more acceptable, no doubt, to the vulgar many, but it would lose its value to the appreciative few, who ask for a true record of what I *observed*.

I believe that Solomon in time made it clear to the dull intellects of the Palmers that the banns were for my marriage with the great, great, great, great-aunt of Margaret, and not with herself. What he said of poor Margery I don't know. I strained my ears to catch what he said, but heard only a buzzing as of bees. I doubt not that he spiced the truth with plenty of falsehood.

Farmer Palmer has a loud voice. I heard him say to his daughter, 'Wait here a bit, Margaret, along with George Rosedhu, and bide till t'other Margery arrives; I back one woman against another.'

'Oh, father!' exclaimed the pretty creature, 'where are you a-going to?'

'My dear, I shall be back directly. This be Fifth o' November, and bonfire night. The lads be all collecting faggots for a blaze

on the moor. I'll fetch 'em here, and they can have the pleasure o' burning the old witch instead of a man o' straw.'

I held out my hands in terror and deprecation. 'You durstn't do it!'

'Why not?' asked the farmer composedly. 'Her's a witch and no mistake. Her have sucked you dry of life as an urchin (hedgehog) sucks a cow of milk.'

'But,' protested Solomon, 'though that be true enough, what about the laws? I won't say but that it be right and scriptural to burn a witch; for it is written, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," but I reckon it be against the laws.'

'Not at all,' said Palmer. 'No man can be had up for burning a person who has no existence.'

'But she has existence,' I remonstrated. 'That is the prime cause of her trouble; she has too much of it; she can't die.'

'There is no evidence of her existence,' argued Palmer. 'You, Solomon, tell me how far back your registers go in Brent Tor Church.'

'Back, I reckon, to about 1680.'

'Very well, then they contain no record of her birth and baptism. Now you cannot be hung for killing a person of whose existence there is absolutely no legal evidence. The law won't touch us if we do burn her.'

'But—but,' I said, crying and snuffling, 'she is your own flesh and blood.'

'That may be, but that is no reason against her cremation. My own Margaret stands infinitely nearer to me, and her interests closer to my heart, than the person and welfare of a remote ancestress. As the banns have been called, Brinsabatch shall go to my daughter and to no one else. In three weeks' time Margaret shall be Mrs. Rosedhu.' He spoke very firmly.

'Father, dear father, how can you be so cruel to me?' cried Margaret. 'Do y' look what an atomy Mr. Rosedhu be come to?'

The burly yeoman paid no heed to his daughter's protest, knowing, no doubt, its unreality. He said to me, 'Look y' here, George Rosedhu, you've had my daughter's name coupled wi' yours in the church to-day, and read out before the whole congregation, without axing my leave or hers. I won't have her made game of even by a man o' substance like you, so she shall marry you before December comes, whether you like it or not.'

'Oh, Mr. Palmer, sir,' I pleaded, 'how can you think to

force your daughter into nuptials which must be distasteful to her?’

‘Don’t you trouble your head about that. Margaret knows which side her bread is buttered. She can distinguish between clotted cream and skim milk.’

‘Besides,’ I argued, ‘I am bound by the most solemn engagements to my Margery. I have promised to settle Brinsabatch on her.’

‘You cannot,’ shouted the farmer of Quether. ‘The thing is impossible. You cannot marry a woman who has no existence in the eye of the law. The only Margaret Palmer of Quether of whom the law has cognizance is she who now stands before you. She has been baptized, vaccinated, and confirmed. What more do you want to establish her existence? Whereas, what documentary proof can the other Margery produce that she exists? There is but one Margaret Palmer of Quether in this nineteenth century; that’s flat.’ He slapped the table, and then, with the air of one administering a crushing argument, he added, ‘Now, tell me, is it possible for a man to marry a woman from whom he is removed by from two to three centuries? Answer me that.’

‘Put in that bald way,’ I said, ‘it does seem unreasonable; but in these Radical-Gladstone-Chamberlain-Bradlaughian times one does not know where one stands. All the lines of demarcation between the possible and the impossible are wiped out, reason and fact do not jump together.’

‘I leave you to digest that question,’ answered Palmer triumphantly. He saw I was pushed into a corner. Then he went out, along with Solomon Davy.

I do not think that Margaret objected to be left to meet Margery. I noticed her pluming and bridling like a game-cock before an encounter. She stroked down the folds of her gown, and pursed up her lips, and now and then shot out her tongue from between her lips, as I have seen a wasp test his sting before stinging me. I was getting uneasy for Margery, and was myself uncomfortable. I said, ‘Miss Margaret, will you be so good as to pick me up my handkercher; it is lying there on the floor, and I be so cruel bad took with the lumbagie that I can’t bend to take it myself.’

She complied with my request somewhat surlily. Then I said, ‘Would you mind, now, just uncorking that bottle there on the shelf, and putting a drop or two on a lump of sugar, and giving it

me. My hands be that shaky I cannot put it in my mouth myself, and I've no teeth to hold it by. The drops be ipecacuahana, and be good for bronchitis.

'No, I won't do it, you nasty old man.'

'Then, miss, will you rub my spine with hartshorn and oil: you'll find a bottle of the mixture on the sideboard, and a bit of flannel in the cupboard?'

'I will do nothing of the sort,' she said testily.

'You won't, miss? Then please to take me up in your arms and carry me to bed. Margery does it. She is very kind and considerate; she begrudges me no trouble, and feeds me out of a spoon.'

'I will do nothing of the sort,' she said again, in short, angry tones, and with an air of supreme disgust.

'I am sorry for it,' said I. That was Gospel truth. I knew that when the two women met such a storm of words would rage as would wreck my poor nerves, and I wanted to be in bed and out of it before the hurricane broke loose.

'You'll have to do all this for me,' I said, 'when you become Mrs. Rosedhu. A very old person needs just as much attention as a baby. I know that, for I've gone through it myself; I've done the nursing. Why will you not leave me alone, and allow Margery to marry me? She will take care of me; she kisses and fondles me. Will you?'

'You disgusting old scarecrow, certainly not.'

'And atomy—scarecrow and atomy—what next will you call me? Yet you want to marry me!'

'You fool!' said Margaret shortly. 'I put up with you for the sake of Brinsabatch.'

'It's the same with Margery,' I said; 'but she put it more pleasantly. Her manners are better than yours; but then she belongs to the old school—the good old school!' I sighed.

What I said made her angry. She did not like to have comparisons drawn between herself and her remote great aunt, to her own disadvantage.

'I suppose I am to have a voice in the matter,' I went on; 'and though I have liked you very much, Margaret, yet I like the other Margery better. One thing in her favour is—she is older than you.'

'You are not going to have her—who has drained life and spirit out of you. Do you think I will allow it? Don't you see I

bear her a grudge? She has turned the fresh and hale George who courted me into a shrivelled old man. It would have been a pleasure to have young George, it is a penance to have the old one. I owe her that, and I shall scratch her eyes out when we meet.'

'Whatever you do,' I pleaded, 'do not hurt her. Your father has made a dreadful threat. I hope he will not execute it.'

'There she comes!' exclaimed Margaret Palmer, starting to her feet in a tremor of delight. 'I hear her step on the walk.'

'Throw the hearthrug over me,' I entreated, 'I cannot bear to be agitated. Toss the table-cover above the hearthrug, all helps to deaden the sound.'

Margaret complied with my request. Here again my narrative must present an appearance of incompleteness. I cannot describe what I neither saw nor heard during the interview between Margaret and Margery, because I was buried under a heavy sheepskin rug and a thick-painted damask table-cover on the top of that. I have no imagination, and I only relate what I actually saw and heard. I saw nothing, and what I heard resembled the jangling of pots and pans when a host of maids are going after a swarm of bees. Of words I could distinguish none, till after a while the hearthrug and table-cover slipped off, owing to my coughing a great deal, the dust out of the hearthrug having got into my bronchial tubes. Then I saw a sight which filled me with dismay.

My room was full of men and boys, with their caps and hats on. Their faces were flushed, and eager, savage delight danced in their eyes. One had a pitchfork, several had sticks, one was armed with a flail. Head and shoulders above the rest stood Farmer Palmer, keeping back the mob that crowded in at the door. In the front of all, as if in a cockpit, opposite each other, stood the two Margarets, red in face, blazing in temper, their tongues going, their eyes sparkling, their hands extended. I will say that poor Margery acted solely on the defensive. She held up her arms in self-protection. Margaret had driven her nails into her cheek and a red streak down the side showed that she had drawn blood.

'See, see!' exclaimed the younger Margaret, 'the witch! her power is broken. The blood is running.'

This is a popular belief. If you can draw blood from a witch, her power—at least over you—is at an end.

My poor Margery gazed with alarm at the crowd of red, threatening faces that looked at her. She shrank from the sticks, the clubs, the pitchfork and flail. She drew behind me, as if I, broken down into premature old age, could defend and assist her. I raised my shrill pipe in entreaty, but my words were without effect. Those horrible faces glowered at Margery with the savagery of dogs surrounding a hare they are about to tear to



pieces. The fear of witchcraft blotted all human compassion out of their hearts.

Suddenly a red light blazed in at the window. The evening had fallen fast and it was now dark.

'Look! look there!' shouted Farmer Palmer. 'Look there, you witch, at the bed made for you. There are plenty of faggots to heap over you should you complain of the cold.'

Margery uttered a scream of terror and clutched my chair, whilst she cowered on the floor behind it.

'Oh, George!' she cried in her agony of dread, 'save me!

save me! They cannot kill me, but they can fry and burn me! Then I shall live on—on—on, a scorched morsel, not like a human being.'

'My darling,' I answered, 'I can do nothing against all these men.' I, however, made a desperate attempt. 'I am master in this house,' I cried in my shrill old tones; 'no one has any right within the doors without my permission, and I order you all to go away peaceably and to leave me alone.'

The men and boys, led by Palmer, laughed, and did not budge an inch. There came a shout from outside,

'Bring out the witch, and let her burn!'

There is an innate cruelty in human nature which neither Christianity, nor education, nor teetotalism, will eradicate. I always thought the peasantry of the West of England wonderfully gentle, kindly, and free from brutality, and yet—scratch the man and the beast appears; here were my peaceable, tender-hearted country men ravening for the life of a poor woman, really pretty, and as good-dispositioned and without malice as an angel. I knew that they would gloat over her anguish in the fire, that they would poke up the fuel to make her burn more thoroughly—they would do so without compassion; not really because they thought her a witch, but because Farmer Palmer had told them they might burn her without fear of the law.

A fresh heap of fuel had been tossed upon the pyre, and the flame spouted up to heaven. A roar from the boys without. 'Bring her out! Let her burn!'

Poor Margery covered her eyes with her hands to shut out the terrible light.

'Oh, George, George!' she cried, 'save me, and I will give you back some of your youth and strength again.'

'Stand back,' thundered Palmer, as the circle of men contracted about her, and hands were thrust forth to grasp and tear her from my chair. 'Do you hear me? She has offered to recover our friend Rosedhu.'

'You cannot do it, my poor darling,' I said.

'Oh, save me, George, and I will indeed.'

'You hear her,' shouted Palmer. 'Stand back, and let her fulfil what she has undertaken.'

Then Margaret put in her voice. She was afraid that her rival would escape. 'No, father, do not trust her. She can do nothing. She is a witch, and wants to cast spells over you all.'

Take her away, boys, and pitch her into the fire. Don't listen to a word she says, however hard she prays to be let go.'

'Into the flames with her!' shouted the men, and stepped forward. 'That is the place for such as she.'

'Fair play, my lads,' said Palmer, and with his strong arm he drove the rabble back. 'As for you, Margaret, don't you interfere. Now then, you—Margery—or whatever you call yourself, stand up and come forward. None shall hurt you if you really recover Rosedhu of his age and incapacity. But, mind you, if you fail, I swear that with this cudgel I will break every bone in your body, and then throw you into the fire with my own arms.'

Margery quivered and cried out at the threat.

'Are you going to do it or not?' asked Palmer.

Poor Margery, feeling the necessity for prompt action, if she would save herself from terrible torture, rose from her crouching posture and stole tremblingly forward.

'Stand out o' the road, boys,' shouted Palmer; 'clear away with you,' and with his stick he swept a circle round Margery and me.

'Oh, George,' she said, with tears of mortification in her blue eyes, 'I'm sorry to do it. I wouldn't if I could; I really wouldn't. But I cannot help myself. These cruel men do so scare me. We might have been so comfortable together; I'd have nursed you into your grave quite beautiful and convenient like, and then I'd have had Brinsabatch to myself, and it would have gone so well for all parties. But now, you see, that blessed arrangement you managed so nicely for me won't come to nothing because of the wickedness of evil men, who walks about like unto roaming and roaring lions seeking who they may devour. I cannot help myself, George. You'll do me the justice to say it were against my will and under compulsion. There, give me your two hands into mine.'

She took my hands and stood opposite me, holding them at arm's length, and looking into my eyes. Poor thing! her lips trembled, and the tears stood on her lids and overflowed and trickled down her soft red cheeks. It was a sore trial and disappointment to her, but she bore it like a Christian, and never cast a word of bitterness at those who forced her to it. And to think what a sacrifice she was making! Those rude creatures knew nothing of that, and could not appreciate the greatness

of her self-sacrifice. I submitted, because I saw in this way only the means of rescuing her.

As she held my hands, I felt as if streams of vital force were flowing from her up my arms into my body. The aching in my bones ceased. My legs became stronger, my head lighter and more erect, I could see better, and hear better. I began to smell the peat burning on the hearth, I felt an inclination to draw Margery on to my knees and kiss her; but when I looked at her, the desire passed, she was waning as I waxed. She grew older, the colour left her cheek, her eyes became dim; then, all at once I sprang to my feet and shook off her hands. 'Enough, Margery, enough,' I said. 'You have restored me sufficient of my strength and health, the rest I freely make over to you. Now for the rest of you.' My voice was full and loud as that of Palmer himself. 'Everyone of you listen to me. This is my house, and an Englishman's house is his castle. Leave this room, leave my land at once, or I prosecute every man jack of you for burglary and trespass. Good Lord! Do you know where you are? Do you know whom I am? This is Brinsabatch, and I am a Rosedhu. Gladstone and Chamberlain and Bradlaugh haven't brought matters quite so far yet that every dirty Radical may come inside a landed proprietor's doors and snap his fingers under his nose.' I snatched the stick out of Palmer's hand and went at the men with it. Not one ventured to show me his face. I saw a sudden change of posture, and a crush and rush out of my door and down my little passage. 'You bide here, Palmer,' I said; 'and Margaret also. But as for all this rag-tag and bob-tail that you have brought in, I'll make a clean sweep of them in a jiffy.'

'It is all very well, Rosedhu,' said Palmer, folding his arms, and setting his legs wide apart. 'You have got rid of the rabble, and you are right to do so if you choose. But you do not get rid of me and Margaret so fast. The banns have been called between my daughter and you; I take no account of the other, she has no legal existence.'

I was silent, and looked from Margery to Margaret.

'Besides,' Palmer went on, 'you may not think so much of her now. In appearance she is old enough to be your grandmother.'

Certainly Margery looked aged, a hale woman, but still old—too old to be thought of as a bride at the hymeneal altar. Margaret was young and pretty; I wish she had not been quite so young and opened such an alarming vista of possibilities. But then I

looked at myself in a glass opposite, and saw that I was grey-headed and on the turn down the hill of life. That was an advantage. 'There is one thing,' I said musingly: 'in the matter of amiability there is no comparison. Margery is as good——'

'We will have no comparisons drawn,' interrupted Palmer, as the girl darted a look at me that plainly said, 'You shall suffer for this some day.' 'Hold out your fist like a man and say you will take my daughter for better, for worse, and make her mistress of



Brinsabatch within the month. The first time of asking took place to-day.'

'Let us say in another couple or three years,' said I, with the principle of the family at heart.

'No,' answered Palmer curtly. 'Within the month. Unless you consent to that—into the fire the old hag goes.'

'Oh, Palmer!' I exclaimed, 'you passed your word to her that she should be spared.'

'No, no. I said that unless she restored you I would break

every bone of her body and throw her into the flames myself. I will certainly not touch her with my stick, nor commit her myself to the flames, but I will let the men outside deal with her as they like. I see what it is, there is no security for you from the witchcrafts of that old hag till there is another woman in this house. That woman must be my daughter, and when she is here I defy all the witches that dance on Cox Tor, and all the pretty wenches of Devonshire to get so much as foot inside the door.'

'Father!' protested Margaret.

'My dear, I know you.'

'Well, you need not *say* it.'

'Give me a twelvemonth's grace,' I entreated.

'No, not above twenty days.'

A howl from without—a fresh faggot was cast on the fire. The pyre was not on my ground but on a bit of waste adjoining the lane, and as I am not lord of the manor I have no rights over it. That the rascals knew.

Poor Margery laid hold of my arm. Margaret at once intervened and thrust her aside. 'You do not touch him again.'

'You see,' laughed the father, 'it is as I said. Come, your hand.'

I gave it with a sigh.

I have written these few pages to let people know that Margery of Quether is about somewhere—where I do not know for certain, but I believe she has gone off into the remotest parts of Dartmoor, where, probably she will seek herself a cave among the granite tors, in which to conceal herself, where no boys will be likely to find and throw stones at her. I am uneasy now that there is such a rush of visitors to Dartmoor to enjoy the wonderful air and scenery, lest they should come across her, and in thoughtlessness or ignorance do her an injury. Now that they know her story, I trust they will give her a wide berth.

I think that what I have gone through has taught me a lesson, but it is not one much recommended, though it is largely followed: Never succour those who solicit succour, or they will suck you dry.



SOME LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS.

VI.

WHEN I first went to Edinburgh, it had for years ceased to be 'the Modern Athens;' the exodus to London had set in; and men of letters no longer made it their residence by choice. There were many persons, however, still remaining who would certainly not be designated as 'local celebrities,' and who could not have been found in any provincial town. They were also of various types. Robert Chambers, and Alexander Smith; Aytoun, and MacCulloch; Russell (of the 'Scotsman'), and Dean Ramsay; Hill Burton, and Gerald Massey; could hardly have been said to run in couples, or to be tarred with the same literary brush. But these of course were exceptional people. Society in general seemed to the Southerner, like the whisky toddy which had such an inexplicable attraction for the natives, a little stiff. Leitch Ritchie had warned me that I should find it so. Though a Scotchman himself, he had, until within the last few years, passed his life in England, and among folk the reverse of 'square-toed'; his nature was frank and emotional; his humour was delicate rather than robust; he had no sympathy with the national observances and superstitions, and unjustly, though under the circumstances not unnaturally, took the formalism of his neighbours for hypocrisy. He was a great admirer of Edinburgh, but it was of the place rather than of the people. In looking on the Castle, or the Calton Hill, or Arthur's Seat, 'all, all save the spirit of man is divine,' was his favourite quotation. This was a misfortune on both sides; for all who knew him liked him.¹ For my part, some of the best friends I have are Scotchmen, and it would be as ungrateful in me, as impertinent, to say one word against them: but, as a rule, *when they are in their own country* they need not culture indeed, but cultivation; it is difficult to make friends with them off-hand; they have no demonstrativeness; and one seems as the agricultural gentleman said of claret, as a liquor, 'to get no forrader with

¹ Even B.—I will call him B., for indeed he was busy enough, though he made no honey—speaking to Thackeray of Leitch Ritchie, admitted that he was 'a very gentlemanly man'; but 'How does B. *know*?' said Thackeray.

them,' even when you *are* getting 'forrarder.' With Scotchmen out of Scotland this is not the case, or not nearly so much the case; but when they are at home it is so. They are difficult of access, and not like those imprudent damsels who are said to meet the other sex 'half-way'! This is no very serious defect, nor one to be resented with such bitterness as Sydney Smith has spoken of it; but to a stranger in Edinburgh, like myself, it was undoubtedly a drawback.

As to hospitality, there was nothing to complain of in that respect, for Robert Chambers not only opened his own doors to me at once, but introduced me to his literary friends. He had long known me, of course, as a contributor to the 'Journal,' though I had met him only once before, under Miss Martineau's roof. His manner was dry, and though his eye twinkled with humour, I did not immediately recognize it as such. It was, in fact, the first acquaintance that I had made with a man of his type, and he puzzled me. I never fell into the Englishman's error in connection with northern 'wut': of epigram and repartee the Scotch have indeed very little; they do not understand the use of the rapier; but their humour, generally grim as that of the Americans (though not the least like it), but sometimes very good-natured, I did not fail to appreciate from the first. Robert Chambers's humour was of the good-natured sort. His nature was essentially 'good'; from the pleasure he took in the popularity of his friends, I used to call him 'the Well-Wisher'; nor did he confine himself, as so many benevolent folks do, to wishing. I was intimately connected with him for twenty years, every one of which increased my regard for him, and when he died I lost one of the truest friends I ever had.

His manner, however, on first acquaintance, was somewhat solid and unsympathetic. He had a very striking face and figure, as well known in Edinburgh as St. Giles's Cathedral, but a stranger would have taken him for a divine, possibly even for one of the 'unco' guid.' In London his white tie, and grave demeanour, caused him to be always taken for a clergyman; a very great mistake, which used to tickle him exceedingly. 'When I don't give a beggar the penny he solicits,' he used to say, 'he generally tells me after a few cursory remarks, that "the ministers are always the hardest."' He could appreciate a joke even upon a subject so sacred as the 'Journal' itself. Mrs. Beecher Stowe had been visiting Edinburgh, and had had some talk, he told me, with

his brother William. She spoke of various periodicals, and presently remarked, in an off-hand manner, 'You publish a magazine yourself, don't you?' So might a visitor to Rome have observed to the Pope, 'You have a church here, have you not—St. Peter's or some such name?'

As these reminiscences only concern themselves with literature, there is no need, save in justice to another, to speak in them of William Chambers: he was in no sense a man of letters; his style was bald, and his ideas mere platitudes; but because he had started the 'Journal' he attributed its subsequent success to himself, though it was owed to his brother. Being childless, and of great wealth, he was enabled to perform certain public acts, which cast Robert, who was weighted with a large family, comparatively into the shade. But there was really no comparison between them.

I know no man who did so much literary work of such various kinds, and upon the whole so well, as Robert Chambers. I have no doubt that he wrote the famous 'Vestiges,' though possibly (for I admit the style is not very recognisable) in collaboration; his scientific and antiquarian works were numerous; his essays of themselves fill many volumes, and admirably reflect his character—humour mixed with common sense.

William, as is well known, unconsciously sat to Dickens for his portrait of Bounderby in 'Hard Times.' He was always talking of the poverty of his youth, and hinting—very broadly—at the genius which had raised him to eminence. He used to give lectures describing the miseries of a poor lad, who had had to 'thole' [toil] for his livelihood, and had afterwards, by diligence and merit, made a great figure in the world; and the peroration—for which everybody was quite prepared (*i.e.* with their handkerchiefs, not at their eyes, but stuffed in their mouths)—used to be always '*I was that Boy.*'

All this was hateful to Robert, and gave him, as well it might, extreme annoyance. I remember being applied to by the proprietors of an American magazine to write a sketch of the lives of the two brothers, and applied to Robert for the materials. He laid his hand upon my shoulder, and after expressing in the kindest manner his regret at being obliged to refuse me any favour, declined to give me his assistance. 'I am sick of the twice-told—nay, of the two-hundred-times-told story,' he said; 'apply to my brother William, and he will be delighted to tell you the whole truth about it—and more. He will be sure to say that we

came barefoot into Edinburgh; whereas, as a matter of fact, we came in a flea (a fly).' It was very funny, but also very pathetic, and I need scarcely say that the article never was written.

To my thinking there is no example of the undue influence of wealth in this country more convincing than the manner in which a good, and one may fairly say, a great man, like Robert Chambers was dwarfed in the public eye beside his brother. When he died there was a paragraph or two in the papers commenting on the event; while the decease of William was dwelt upon as a national calamity, though indeed no one went quite the length of saying that 'the gaiety of nations had been eclipsed' by it.

It is five-and-twenty years since I lived in Edinburgh, and no doubt great changes have since taken place there in social matters; but what struck a stranger most at that time was the extraordinary disregard of the precept that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. A man might do many things much worse and be regarded with much charity; but if he broke the Sabbath no one had a good word to say for him. The only parallel to such a state of things occurs in a certain narrative of a pious stock-broker who about that time was taken by Italian brigands. They were thieves and murderers of the deepest dye, superstitious to the last degree, and speaking a language of which he understood nothing; yet a great deal of his captivity was spent in the attempt to teach them to observe Sunday. He made no other missionary effort, but at that he worked away, until he was ransomed, with the greatest perseverance: and I have no doubt he was a native of Edinburgh.

About this period a majority in the House of Commons had been 'snatched' in a division against the Sunday post, which prevented the whole country from sending or receiving letters on the seventh day; as no post went out from London on Sunday, and there was no telegraph, this made two consecutive days of failure of correspondence; the inconvenience was insupportable, and after six weeks the old *régime* was again adopted, but not in Edinburgh. The only alleviation permitted was that for one half-hour on Sunday morning the Unregenerate were allowed to send for their letters to the General Post Office. The scene beggared description; though I made an effort to describe it—not in the 'Journal' of course, but in 'Household Words,' under the descriptive title of 'A Sabbath Morn.' Hundreds of men, women, and children crowded the Great Hall, calling out-their names and addresses at the top of

their voices, and the letters addressed to them were thrown at their heads by unwilling and scandalised officials. It was a Pandemonium which even the 'awakening' sermons of the day could hardly rival in their descriptions of what was awaiting those who read their letters on a Sunday.

This open exhibition of the Sabbatarian yoke was nothing, however, as compared with its secret and unacknowledged sway. In the street where I first resided, it struck me, that to judge by its drawn-down blinds, the people spent a good deal of their time upon the seventh day in bed; on my second Sunday, however, I was undeceived, for my landlady came up, and informed me that, though she had not spoken of it last Sunday, she must now draw my attention to the fact that it was not usual in Edinburgh to draw up the window blinds on the Sabbath, and that the neighbours had begun to remark upon the 'unlawful' appearance of her establishment, which had heretofore been a God-fearing house.

What astonished me even more than this example of fetish-worship itself, was that I found persons, otherwise sensible enough, to endorse, or at all events to excuse it. Hill Burton, for instance, a man of exceptional intelligence, to whom I expressed my sentiments upon the subject pretty strongly, replied that a 'national prejudice was always worthy of respect,' or something to that amazing effect. An Englishman will listen unmoved, and even amused, to a description of the weaknesses of his fellow-countrymen; but a Scotchman, like the Greenwich pensioner of old, who would never allow 'the Hospital' to be found fault with except by himself, resents it.

This was the case even with so robust a man as Alexander Russell, of the 'Scotsman'; a great personage in those days in Edinburgh, and far beyond it. I remember saying something about the stiffness of social life in Edinburgh in his presence, and instantly apologising for it in rather a maladroit manner. 'You have so little of it yourself,' I said, 'that I quite forgot you were a Scotchman at all.' 'Sir,' he said, 'I want no compliment at the expense of my country.' When I ventured to reply, however, that he ought to accept it as being, probably, the very first thing that ever *had* been done at the expense of his country, his sense of humour at once came to the rescue, and we became great friends. He even stood a sly reference to the fact that no return tickets were at that time issued from Edinburgh to London, but only the other way.

I have never met a man with a keener sense of drollery than Alexander Russell: and in his hands it became a powerful engine. Readers looked for his articles in the 'Scotsman' with expectations altogether different from those which the ordinary leader-writer awakens. They were not only logical and convincing, but had a strain of good-natured irony running through them, which—save to the subjects of their satire—was universally acceptable. His anecdotes were admirable, and those who figured in them were drawn from the life. He used to call me 'that interloping Englishman,' and would expatiate with great humour upon the unnatural and unparalleled condition of affairs which had brought one of my countrymen up to Scotland to take the bread out of native mouths. We soon grew to be so intimate that he would joke—and by no means 'with difficulty'—upon the national peculiarities, in my presence, just as though I had not been 'an interloper.'

Besides the humour of his stories there was almost always some graphic illustration of character in them. In Sutherlandshire and some other northern counties of Scotland, the Church was at that time ruled by certain elders of a puritanic sort, but who had also an eye to the main chance. A young man in whom they were interested came down to practise the law in Edinburgh, and after a month or two, one of the elders followed him and inquired of Russell how their young friend S. was getting on. 'I think,' he said, 'he will succeed, for he is a truly moral man!'

'He's well enough,' returned Russell rather contemptuously; 'but as for his morality, I am not aware, though he does come from your part of the country, that he is more moral than other people.'

'Hoot, man!' was the unexpected rejoinder; 'I dinna mean drink and the lasses, but gambling and sic things as you lose money by.'

A still more characteristic story of his was in connection with his own affairs. The Liberal party in Scotland, who were under great obligations to him for his advocacy as a journalist, had subscribed very handsomely to present him with a testimonial in hard cash. He was not a rich man, but he had doubts as to whether he should accept a gift which might destroy or weaken his prestige; and he consulted a fellow-countryman upon the point. The advice, as he told it me with infinite relish, was as follows:—

'If it is five thousand pounds, my man, tak' it; if it's less

than five thousand, don't tak' it; and say you wouldn't have taken it if it had been fifty thousand !'

Unfortunately, from my inability, already alluded to, to master, or even to imitate, an alien tongue, I am obliged to relate these things in English, whereby I am conscious they lose much in the telling. As Russell delivered them, with appropriate expression and 'mouthing out his hollow o's and a's,' they were infinitely more diverting.

The former editor of the 'Scotsman,' when he retired to enjoy his well-earned leisure, was so good as to give Russell some particular advice. 'The conduct of a daily paper,' he said, 'is always a very serious thing, full of dangers and difficulties; but in addition to its usual anxieties *you*, my friend, will every night have to keep the most vigilant watch lest that man Hill Burton should contrive to insert his theory about Scotch cheeses into your columns.'

It is not necessary to particularise what it was; it will suffice to say that this theory—based upon the exposure of Scotch cheeses in front of the shops, and the treatment to which they were consequently exposed—was not complimentary, or likely to recommend them to the purchaser. 'Day and night,' said Russell, 'for fifteen years, I never forgot my predecessor's warning; a hundred times that theory endeavoured to gain admittance into my columns, and by most unlooked-for channels; sometimes it lurked concealed in an article upon the Crimean War, sometimes in one on the Divorce Laws, sometimes in one on the divisions of the Free Church of Scotland, or even on the Disruption itself; but it was always detected and struck out. It was a duel to the death; for I knew that Hill Burton would never relax his efforts to get his views upon Scotch cheeses into print while there was breath in his body. On the morning of the last day of the fifteenth year, he ran into my office, waving a paper in his hand, and crying out, "It's in, it's in!"

"What," cried I, "you persevering devil, not in the 'Scotsman' surely?"

"No," said he, "in 'Chambers's Information for the People.'"

'My relief of mind is not to be described, and I must also confess (here Russell turned to me with a chuckle) that it gave me no little satisfaction to think that it was your friends the Chawmerses after all who'd got it.'

Russell was not a Radical, far from it; he had that somewhat exaggerated respect for long established rank which often accom-

panies Scotch liberalism; but, apart from its political bearing, he could see the absurdity of its claims as clearly as anyone. At that time there were two Lords of Session in Edinburgh of similar sounding names, Lord Neaves and Lord Deaves. A young sprig of the former's family once informed Russell that he 'belonged to the oldest house in England—Neaves is in fact the elder branch of the house of Neville.'

'Dear me,' was the dry reply; 'then in that case, reasoning by analogy, Lord Deaves may claim a still more ancient origin.'

The wit and wisdom of Alexander Russell would indeed fill a volume. Few men made a more striking figure in local society than he did in the times I speak of; and albeit they were not the great times of Edinburgh, he had many noteworthy contemporaries.

Dr. Simpson, though he was not then Sir William, was at the summit of his reputation. His appearance was remarkable; Gerald Massey has graphically described it in his dedication to one of his poems, 'Body of Bacchus with the head of Jove.' Like many of his noble profession, he was very generous, and always took into account the means of those who consulted him. He was fond of literature and literary men. I met him first at the bedside of Leitch Ritchie, whom he attended assiduously, notwithstanding the much more profitable patients that were always awaiting him. I doubt indeed whether he ever took a guinea from him. Simpson, too, was a great teller of stories, of a different kind indeed from those of Russell, but not less interesting, for the pages of human life which lie open to the intelligent physician are the most attractive of all reading. I remember no one in his profession who more impressed me as being a man of genius than he did. If not a wit himself, he was, at all events on one occasion, the cause of wit in another. He had, of course, an immense practice in Edinburgh, but it seemed to me a world too narrow for the exercise of his powers, and I once inquired of a great English doctor how it was that Simpson had never come to London. 'My dear sir,' he replied with a dry smile, 'he is quite right to stop where he is; there are no coroners' inquests in Scotland.' The Faculty has a large collection of professional jokes, but few, I think, better than this one.

Simpson had a warm admiration for the simplicity and tenderness of Leitch Ritchie's character, as indeed had everyone with whom he was brought in close connection. He was one of the last survivors of a school of literary men now almost, if not quite

extinct; it had the culture of the silver fork school without their affectation, and the simplicity of the Bohemians without their disreputableness. The author of 'Wearyfoot Common' had been one of the hardest workers of his time; 'as a young husband,' he told me, 'I have often written for the press for hours, while at the same time my foot has rocked the cradle of a child!' Composition—especially invention—under such circumstances seemed to me to be an impossibility, and I said so. 'Yet necessity, my young friend,' was his half-grave, half-gay reply, 'is said to be the mother of invention. You do not know what it is to live by your pen *only*.' And indeed the difference between this, and merely supplementing one's income by one's pen is enormous.

In his time Leitch Ritchie had written upon almost every subject under heaven. His total ignorance of any matter was no obstacle to his undertaking it; he cheerfully sat down to the task of reading it up. To store the mind with general information he held to be sheer extravagance; to acquire what might never be wanted was a waste of time, and he had no time to spare; it was only rich men who could afford to fritter away their intelligence in that lavish way. On the other hand, if he wanted to write upon a particular subject he would contrive to know more about it in twenty-four hours than any man of general information could possibly know. He was, as is well known, the companion of Turner in his continental travels, and an authority on matters of art; and he once wrote a pamphlet on the ear, for an aurist, which made that gentleman's professional reputation.

As an editor, this many-sidedness was of great advantage to him, and still more to his contributors; scientific or poetic, imaginative or matter-of-fact, he could sympathize, more or less, with them all. It was a matter of boast with its proprietors that, during the long course which the 'Journal' had run, its contributors formed of themselves a public; and they were at least as various as they were numerous. I remember three remarkable contributions coming in one day, which my co. tossed over to me, with a nod of introduction in each case: 'That comes from an archbishop,' he said (naming him); 'that from a washerwoman, and that from a thief.'

Until a man becomes an editor he can never plumb the depths of literary human nature; the position affords an opportunity for the most surprising studies, especially among the Rejected, who form nineteen-twentieths of his constituency. Vanity, as might

be expected, is the leading feature of this class ; but the monsters it begets in the way of suspicion and duplicity are almost inconceivable.

It was by no means uncommon to find an article, after the first few pages, gummed together ; the writer's notion being that his paper would go through a very perfunctory examination indeed, and that he would thus be in a position to prove what insurmountable obstacles he had had to contend against ; it never struck him that, even if his device was not discovered, the first few pages would have been amply sufficient data for his condemnation.

Others, however, would admit that their contributions were not uniformly admirable ; 'After the first ten chapters,' they would write, 'you will find, Mr. Editor, that my story grows intensely interesting.' When these precious MSS. came back to hand, its proprietors were of course positively convinced that the eleventh chapter had never been reached, and so far at least they came to a just conclusion.

Others, again, were really modest as to their talents ; they looked for acceptance on quite other grounds than literary merit ; because they were only seventeen years of age, or because they were more than seventy ; because they had an aged aunt dependent on them for subsistence ; because their husband was a clergyman, and wanted his chancel repaired ; or because they were of Royal descent.

Some would-be contributors did not confine their efforts to 'make the thing that is not as the thing that is' to story-writing ; I am sorry to say they stooped to deception. Their articles, they would assure us, had been written with a view to our 'particular needs,' and 'had been sent to no other periodical ;' which was not always true. We 'Wes' had an almost infallible test for ascertaining whether our magazine is the first love of a contributor, and I have known language of virgin passion to be applied to us, after it had been addressed—in vain—to several other quarters. The most amazing of these hypocritical appeals were, however, personal, and directed to my coadjutor himself. The writers had known his works from their childhood ; had admired his genius from the first moment they had begun to appreciate literary excellence ; and held his name as a household word—yet never by any accident did they spell it right.

The discovery of these lapses from the path of rectitude in persons of my own calling, or who, at least, aspired to it, shocked me not a little. It is a comfort to reflect that I am narrating

incidents of a quarter of a century ago, since which (as is well known) human nature has become another thing altogether. Moreover, if some of my editorial experiences were disenchanting, there were many more of quite an opposite nature, and which gave great zest and interest to my new calling. With such an example of conscientiousness and good-will as I had before me in Leitch Ritchie, it would have been difficult indeed to take a cynical view of things, even had I been so disposed; unhappily I was but a short time under his tutelage; ill-health compelled him to resign his duties and remove to London, when our partnership (as he always called it, though I was but *in statu pupillari*) had lasted barely twelve months.

While I am upon the subject, I may mention one or two cases—the individuals connected with them being long dead and gone—illustrative of the curiosities of editorship. I had been in the habit of receiving from a certain contributor some admirable sketches of low London life; graphic, though without offensive coarseness, they convinced the reader of their absolute reality; and as the visiting of the dens of the metropolis was not at that time so fashionable an amusement as it is at present, my amateur explorer interested me very much. It struck me, I remember, that a large proportion of the payment he received for his sketches must needs find its way into the pockets of the policemen employed as his bodyguard.

One day, after a long interval, he sent me a paper called 'A Night in the Thames Tunnel'; he described himself as being without the twopence that ordinarily procured him a lodging, and as resorting to the Tunnel—at that time a penny footway—for warmth and shelter. The same idea, he said, had occurred to others; for on the occasion in question he had found several homeless persons, like himself, by no means of the lower classes, huddled under the gas-lights, and waiting wearily for the dawn. The preface, as well as the article, was so lifelike, that for the first time it occurred to me that my contributor might really be as poor as he professed to be. I therefore wrote to ask him if his affairs were indeed so unprosperous, and making no apology if they were not so, since my mistake was evidently, in that case, due to his marvellous powers of description. I got in reply one of the saddest revelations I ever received; but it is sufficient here to say that my correspondent was utterly destitute.

That a man possessed of such talents should be in such ex-

treme necessity seemed almost appalling. I went at once to Alexander Russell, whom I knew to be just then in want of literary assistance, and laid the case before him.

'Of course there is *something* wrong,' he said grimly: 'probably drink; but I'll give your *protégé* a trial.' And the Thames Tunneller came up to Edinburgh forthwith at a salary of 200*l.* a year.

The end of the story was almost as strange as its commencement; my contributor (who did *not* drink, I am happy to say) kept his place for twelve months or so, and then departed elsewhere, when I lost sight of him altogether. I thought he had 'gone under' for good and all. Ten years afterwards a work on London life, purporting to be written by a Scripture Reader, made a great sensation. I read and admired it like the rest of the world, but my interest in it was vastly increased on receiving a presentation copy of the second edition, with 'my first success' in a well-known handwriting on the title-page. It was the Thames Tunneller emerged to light for the second time.

There was a young poet among my contributors who also immensely interested me. His effusions were not only far above the average of magazine verse, but of great merit and still greater promise. He was not twenty-one, and yet there was nothing morbid in his compositions. They were so hopeful and wholesome, indeed, that it was impossible to have supposed, what was in fact the case, that he was suffering from an incurable disease and knew it. We corresponded pretty frequently. One day I received a reply from his father, instead of himself, announcing his son's death. It is too sacred to quote here, but what he said of the intense pleasure the young man had derived from the encouragement I had been able to afford him gave me a lasting satisfaction.

On addressing, on another occasion in the course of business, a pretty constant contributor, I found that she also—for it was a young lady—had passed into 'the sunless land.' In her case again the father wrote, but in utter ignorance that his daughter had ever been an authoress. 'The considerable sums,' he said, 'which she seemed to have at command for charitable purposes had for some time astonished us; but her disposition was as reticent as it was benevolent, and she never let us into her harmless secret.' The vanity which is supposed to be almost inseparable from a young author's character certainly did not exist in this case.

There were sadder incidents even than these. Some one lost

to his friends, or at all events to one friend, either mother or lover, had written a poem in the 'Journal,' which, meeting her eye long after its publication, had apparently betrayed to her his identity.

'I fear that what I am about to request,' she wrote, 'is beyond your power to grant, but I make it with an extreme yearning . . . can you, *will* you tell me who wrote or sent to you the lines entitled——? Was there a name or initials? Was it sent from England or *Australia*? . . . Try, try, sir, to remember: a broken-hearted and dying woman will ever bless you! For pity's sake, endeavour to satisfy me!'

Worse, though less pathetic cases, than these meet the editorial eye. The system of anonymous publication is, in my opinion, far superior to that of signed articles, if only for the reason that it gives the unknown author his best chance; but it has, of course, its drawbacks, and one of them is that it affords the opportunity for misrepresentation and fraud. Mere vanity often induces weak natures to lay claim to compositions which have attracted notice. I have known dozens of instances of it, some of which have had the most painful results. The lie once told requires a score of other lies to corroborate it, but detection in the end is certain.

'I hope I am not taking too great a liberty,' writes one unhappy father, 'in asking about an article written in your *Journal*, of such and such a date' (let me once more say I am speaking of things that happened more than twenty years ago, and which can therefore now hardly offend anyone). 'I have been told—and by himself—that it was written by a son of mine. I fear—I fear that vanity has induced him to tell us a falsehood. Will you be good enough to write the word "Yes," or the word "No" inside the enclosed stamped envelope?'

This young gentleman had only deceived his family, but there were some cases in which positive frauds were committed, and money taken for articles written by another hand. I remember a very well-informed individual doing me the honour of a personal visit and bringing with him an article on 'The Literature of (say) Cuba,' in which island he described himself as being a resident. It was an interesting paper, and as I had never happened to hear of Cuban literature, I accepted it. A few days afterwards he called again, announcing himself as being about to depart for his native isle, and inquired whether it would be convenient to let him have the payment for the paper in advance, a request which was at once complied with. When the paper appeared, months afterwards, I

got one of those letters, half playful, half satirical, with which all editors are familiar, from 'A Constant Reader,' pointing out that it was advisable in a journal professing to publish only original articles to mention the fact when any exception was made, as in the case of the 'Literature of Cuba,' the whole of which, 'as you are doubtless aware,' said my correspondent, 'is copied *verbatim* and *literatim* from (I think) "Murray's Foreign and Colonial Library."'

This was reprehensible enough; but not so bad as copying stories—of course not recent ones—out of other magazines, and not only getting money from us under false pretences, but embroiling us with our contemporaries, who in their turn borrowed with equal unconsciousness from us. One of them revenged itself by printing the name and address of the rascal, but the name was a false one, and the address he had changed. On one occasion a wretch sent us a story (of course, under another title) published twenty years before in the 'Journal' itself! This was seething a kid in its mother's milk indeed.

Serious as these fraudulent transactions were to ourselves, they were much more terrible to the relatives of the criminals, who were in most cases young people. 'I cannot conceive,' writes a father, 'what induced my unhappy son to take this course, as he did not require money, and his conduct in other respects has been most satisfactory. I have just learned from him the details of his misconduct towards you. . . . I beg to send you a cheque for the various amounts he has thus unworthily obtained from you, and earnestly hope you will see your way to accept it, without inflicting on him (and me) a public exposure.'

One of the characteristics of most young authors, or would-be authors, is their impatience; they are in a great hurry to be accepted, and when they are accepted, they are in a still greater hurry to be printed. They have not the least idea of the exigencies of publication, and do not understand why their contribution which was sent in on the 20th of the month should not be in type upon the 27th. I had experienced this feeling of impatience myself, and had had cause to regret it. When I was a very tender stripling indeed—not more than sixteen or seventeen at most—I had sent an article to the 'People's Journal,' and received the joyful tidings of its acceptance. It was the first paper that I had ever had accepted, and I was wild with triumph and delight. Rather to my annoyance, however, when I purchased the next Saturday's

number, I did not find in it what I looked for. However, I managed to exist for seven days longer without bursting, bought the succeeding number within the first hour of its appearance, tore it open without waiting for a paper-knife—and was disappointed again. Then I wrote to the editor, very calmly and dispassionately, pointing out that there had been a mistake, and begging, in the most courteous manner, that it might not occur again. It did, however, occur again, whereupon I wrote him another letter, not so dispassionate, and in course of post received—most deservedly—my MS. *declined*. With this recollection in my mind, I of course felt no surprise at the impatience of contributors. The forms it took were, however, sometimes very peculiar. That the subject was as old as the hills did not make the slightest difference. The same anxiety for instant publication was manifested for some essay upon the character of Queen Cleopatra as though it were on a topic of the day; it never seemed to strike these writers that what the world had done without for a thousand years or so, it might still do without for another fortnight; they hoped to see their contribution towards the History of the Visigoths ‘in our *next* issue,’ with the word ‘next’ underlined.

One gentleman, who had sent us a pressing paper of this kind (I think on the Round Towers of Ireland), was especially unfortunate; he was an Irishman himself, he told us, which however was somewhat superfluous, for in his precipitancy he had omitted to give his address. A week afterwards he wrote in a great state of excitement to know why he had not heard from us, which nothing but the appearance of his Round Towers in print could, in his opinion, excuse; but in this case, too, he gave no clue, save the postmark, which was Dublin, to his private address. Then he wrote to say that flesh and blood could stand such neglect no longer, and that he was coming over to Edinburgh to demand a personal explanation; and still he omitted to say where he wrote from. Eventually he actually arrived, livid and foaming, and on being confronted with his headless correspondence, only burst into a roar of laughter, and observed that it was ‘mighty queer.’

Strange as are the ways of the rejected contributor, they are not more peculiar than those of the voluntary correspondent. The interest he is so good as to take in a periodical is of course flattering to those who conduct it, but also involves some loss of time in the endeavour to satisfy his inquiries. Some are matter-of-fact beyond anything which the imagination can conceive. I

remember publishing a romance of a certain island, not in the geographies, where things took place which do not happen every day, and arousing an unexpected desire in one of these gentry to visit it. 'I shall be obliged,' writes the intending emigrant, 'if you will kindly answer the following questions:—

'1. The date at which the account of this interesting spot was written.

'2. Under what Government it is placed.

'3. Price of land, and method of obtaining it.

'4. Language spoken.

'5. Average summer heat.

'6. Kind of sponge referred to; honeycomb or cup.

'7. Occupations or trades most in request in the island.'

Another correspondent finds that a story, published in the 'Journal' some years ago, is founded upon a real incident in the life of his great-grandfather, and therefore demands that it be 're-printed in an early number. Many friends would take a sufficient number of copies of the magazine to fully reimburse you for any expense; and it would attract more attention if brought out in one of the numbers for this year.'

A good many of the casual correspondents of a periodical are evidently downright mad; they use it as an escape-pipe for their lunacy, and thereby, no doubt, prevent themselves from 'jumping on their mothers,' or destroying their family at a blow: to extract their communications would be like quoting from a diary kept in Hanwell; but the semi-sane ones are really noteworthy. These are generally scientific persons who differ from the usual deductions which science has drawn, and who have marvellous systems of their own, only awaiting development to revolutionise the face of civilization.

One of them had a 'mechanical hippogriff,' only requiring a few pounds to inflate it, to go careering over the fields of space; moreover (though, like 'the two little boys who only learn Latin' in the items required of a governess, 'it was scarcely worth while to put that in') it had incidentally 'a method of expelling vitiated air by a succession of revolving fans, which, if thought advisable, *would discharge the whole atmosphere of one country into another.*'

Another of these quasi-scientific gentlemen was furious with us because we thought the world was round. 'I suppose, sir,' he writes, 'that there is no periodical in the kingdom which has done more to sustain the infidel imposture of the Newtonian theory than

yours. Are you still determined to defend what you *know* to be the grossest fraud invented by man? It is perfectly scandalous that a parcel of critics and editors should persist in fooling the public with the idea of a globulous world.'

The grounds upon which acceptance is demanded by the would-be contributor are most curious and unlooked for. One lady offers, in return for the satisfaction of seeing herself in print, 'to take in a dozen copies of your esteemed periodical'; another, 'being the daughter of a colonel, has a large circle of friends who, in case of publication, would purchase the magazine;'; another has the literary recommendation of 'one of the clergy.'

Now and then these applicants grew serious even to devoutness. 'Time,' observes one of them, 'is the gift of Heaven, not to be frittered away in the composition of mere medley rhymes,' but 'the torrent of imagination which impels her' can hardly fall short of positive inspiration; if she is wrong, 'God forgive her waste of His precious time'; if right, 'a post office-order will oblige.'

Some correspondents have grievances of the most unimaginable type. It occurs of course to more than one native of Erin that 'we have a settled purpose to caricature and misrepresent Irish characteristics,' otherwise in our Irish stories 'such mistakes would never be made in the brogue'; but such complaints were sometimes not only national, but local. One writer inquires why the town of which she is an inhabitant is not represented in our columns by its local geniuses. 'I and a few other ladies,' says the writer, 'are desirous of informing you that this town is full of native talent. We have two poets of very high character and widespread fame—Mr. A, and Mr. B—next Mr. C; and next Mr. D, and Mr. E. The first is a gentleman of fortune; his poetry is a little strained, but very fine. There would be no chance of your getting anything from him, if (as I understand) you don't allow your contributors' names to be put to their productions. Mr. B is one of our chief literary characters, a member of several of the learned societies in London, and who has published many things. Nothing could be had from him upon the terms stated above. The next is Mr. C, a tradesman, and a very fine pastoral and descriptive poet; Mr. D is very fair, and has put forth a book of verse; Mr. E is a wealthy retired solicitor, out of whom there would be no chance of getting any of his productions without money. . . . I have no motive but your own good, and to show how our city is neglected.'

I could tell stories without end of my editorial experience, some

humorous, some pathetic; but the impersonality of the mysterious 'We' ought, I feel, to be respected. If the reader wishes for more revelations of this description, I refer him to the 'Editor's Tales' of Anthony Trollope, which are not only very charming in themselves, but unconsciously betray the kindness of heart of the writer, and the tender conscientiousness with which he discharged his trust. I may add, considering the slenderness of his material, and the strong impression that each narrative produces on the mind, that the volume is as convincing a proof of the genius of the author as anything he ever wrote. I once expressed this opinion to Trollope, who assented to my view of the matter, but added, with a grim smile, that he doubted whether anybody had ever read the book except myself, by which of course he meant to imply that it had had a very small circulation as compared with that of his novels.

I have shown, I think, that the gravity of Edinburgh life was greatly mitigated by humour, but still it was very serious. Everybody must remember Dean Ramsay's story of the dissipated young man 'who went to too many funerals'; and there was certainly something of austerity even in its pleasures. With a large section of the community everything that had relation to pastime was considered wicked; and the booksellers they patronised sold nothing but improving books. Wishing to have some theoretical knowledge of the national game, I ordered of one of them a hand-book of golf, and in due course received a neat little volume entitled 'The Hand of Providence, exemplified in the Life of John B. Gough' (the teetotaller). I took it complainingly to Robert Chambers, who laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, and rather grudgingly observed, 'Now, why should this have happened to you and not to me?'

So seriously did society at large regard matters, that the droller side of things escaped their observation. A beggar man had stood on the old bridge for the last ten years with a placard on his breast, with this inscription:—'Blind from my birth; I have seen better days'; and no one ever seemed to perceive that it was a contradiction in terms.

In Princes Street was in contemplation (nay, for all I know it was done) to erect a marble cattle fountain with the motto:—'Water was not meant for man alone'; but it utterly escaped public notice that such an inscription would be an encouragement to whiskey-drinkers.

In my case, besides the general gravity of tone, there was an especial reason, which, in spite of the many attractions of Edinburgh, prevented my ever feeling quite at home there. From native dulness—or to whatever other cause the inability to catch an alien tongue may be ascribed—I had always a difficulty in appreciating the niceties of language. The study of character—which is the only study I ever really cared for—was consequently debarred from me. Many English authors have depicted Scotchmen in their own country; Saxon chieftains have gone amongst them making notes and afterwards printed them—though I don't remember, by the bye, that the likeness has been ever acknowledged by the originals—but I felt that I had not their gift; that I could only see things skin deep. This annoyed me to an extent which to most persons would seem impossible and incomprehensible. I felt like a man seeking for gold, and who knows that it is beneath him in large quantities, but who has unfortunately neither spade nor pickaxe; I resented the mere roughness and nodosities of the ground.

What struck me as a curious feature of Edinburgh society was the extraordinary respect paid to professors of all sorts, though they were almost as numerous as colonels in the United States. In England we seldom speak of them (except in such cases as that of Professor Holloway) as professors, and still more rarely address them by that title, but in Edinburgh it was not so. I remember an amusing example of this. At a large party, at which Alexander Smith the poet (he had just been made Secretary to the University) was present, I happened to speak of him to our hostess.

'Notwithstanding all the praise that has been showered upon him,' I said, 'what a modest young fellow he is!'

She shook her head with gravity. 'I am sorry to say I cannot agree with you; for I have just heard him actually call Professor Soanso, Soanso, which I consider to be a great liberty in a person of his position.'

The notion of a poet being in an inferior position to a professor tickled me exceedingly, but it was not easy to find people to share the joke.

As a matter of fact, Alexander Smith was one of the most modest of men. The appearance of his 'Life Drama' had evoked a tumult of acclaim sufficient to have turned the heads of most men of his age; a pattern-drawer at some commercial house in Glasgow, he awoke one morning to find himself the most bepraised of poets; but it altered his simple character not one whit; and

when the pendulum swung the other way, he took detraction with the same good-natured philosophy. 'At the worst,' he said, quoting from his own poem, 'it's only a ginger-beer bottle burst.' The epithet 'spasmodic,' so freely applied to him by the critics of the day, was singularly out of place; he was full of quiet common sense, mingled with a certain Lamb-like humour. In these respects, though of a widely different character, he resembled another Edinburgh notoriety of that day, the gentle and hospitable Dean Ramsay.

The simplicity of the latter's character extended to his diction; in the last letter he wrote to me on quitting Edinburgh, he is so good as to say, after speaking of our intercourse, which was mutually agreeable, 'You are just the sort of person I find so pleasant,' and adds, 'Do you remember dining here with poor Aytoun? Something was wrong with him that night, and he was rather grumpy.' I am afraid he must have been *very* 'grumpy,' to cause the Dean to mention it; but it is only just to the reputation of the Professor as a good companion to add that I had no recollection of the circumstance.

The acquaintance of Dr. John Brown in Edinburgh I did not happen to make, and have always regretted the fact. He writes to me on the eve of my departure, apropos of a review I had written on his book 'Our Dogs,' in which I had termed him, to his great content, 'the Landseer of Literature,' 'You must let me thank you most cordially for your generous, pleasant, and altogether capital notice of 'Our Dogs.' It made me more than ever reproach myself for not having made your personal friendship. I have been cheated twice this week out of meeting you, once at Russell's, on Wednesday, and at Lancaster's to-morrow.' (Lancaster was a young advocate of great promise, of whom Dickens wrote to me, from Edinburgh, long afterwards, 'He is the most able fellow I have met in these parts,' and whose early death was greatly deplored.) 'I shall watch your career through life with sincere interest, and if you get all that I wish you, you need not greatly grumble.'

If the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, the wish of so excellent a fellow as Dr. John Brown was surely not to be despised.

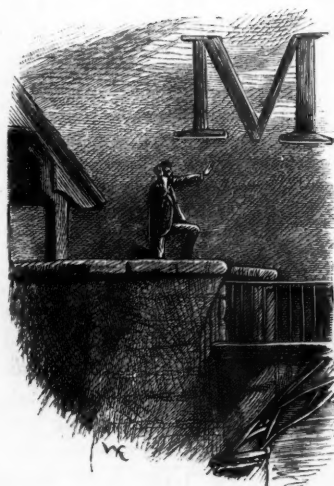
THE GIANT'S ROBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'VICE VERSÂ.'

'Now does he feel his title
Hang loose upon him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.'—*Macbeth*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN SUSPENSE.



ARK, as he left his wife with that hastily invented excuse of the forgotten tobacco, turned back with a blind instinct of escape; he went to the foot of the hilly little street down which Mabel and he had lately passed, and halted there undecidedly; then he saw a flight of rough steps by a stone fountain and climbed them, clutching the wooden rail hard as he went up; they led to a little row of cabins, barricaded by stacks of pine-wood, and further on there was another short flight of steps, which brought him out upon a little terrace in front of a primi-

tive stucco church. Here he paused to recover breath and think, if thought was possible. Above the irregular line of high-pitched brown roofs at his feet he could just catch a glimpse of the rushing green Rhine, with the end of the covered way on the bridge and the little recess beyond. It was light enough still for him to see clearly the pair that stood in that recess: Vincent's broad figure leaning earnestly towards that other one—he was drawing closer—now he drew back again as if to watch the effect of his words. Mark knew well what she must be hearing down there. He strained his eyes as the dusk shrouded the two more

and more ; he thought that, even there, he would be able to see a change when the blow fell. 'Mabel, my darling—my innocent darling!' he groaned aloud, 'have pity on me—do not give me up!' From the opposite side he could hear the faint strains of a street organ which was playing a lively popular air ; it had come in that morning, and he and Mabel had been amused at the excitement it produced amongst the unsophisticated inhabitants ; it had exhausted its *répertoire* over and over again, but its popularity seemed yet undiminished.

As he leaned there on the rough stone parapet his panic gradually abated, and the suspense became intolerable ; he could not stay there. By this time too the worst must have happened ; it was useless to try to avoid the inevitable ; he would go down and face his doom, without giving her further cause to despise him. The idea of denying the charge never occurred to him for a moment ; he knew that face to face with his accuser such audacity was beyond his powers ; he had nothing to say in defence, but he must hear his sentence.

And so, in a sort of despairing apathy, he went steadily down again to the street level, and, with a self-command for which he had not dared to hope, passed with a firm tread along the covered way across the bridge.

After the first surprise of meeting, Vincent had had to explain, in answer to Mabel's eager questions, the manner in which he had escaped being a victim to the 'Mangalore' disaster ; the explanation was commonplace enough, and when it was given she exclaimed reproachfully, 'But why did you lead us all to believe that the worst had happened? You must have known how it would grieve us ; it was not like you, Vincent.'

'But I wrote,' he rejoined ; 'surely you got my letter, Mabel?'

'You *did* write, then?' she said. 'I am glad of that. But the letter never came. I never dreamed that there was the slightest hope till I saw you here. I hardly dared to speak to you at first. And how do you come to be here at all? You have not told me that yet.'

'I was on my way to punish a scoundrel,' he said abruptly, 'but I had almost forgotten all that. Never mind about me, Mabel ; tell me about yourself now. You don't know how I have been longing for the very smallest news of you!'

'What am I to tell you?' said Mabel smiling. 'Where shall I begin, Vincent?'

'Well, first, your own question back again,' he said. 'How do *you* come to be here, and all alone? Are your people at the hotel? Am I to see them to-night?'

'My people are all at Glenthorne just now,' said Mabel with some natural surprise, which, however, only made Vincent conclude that she must be travelling with friends. Were they her future parents-in-law, he wondered jealously. He could not rest till he knew how that was.

'Mabel,' he said earnestly, 'they told me you were engaged; is it true?'

She had not yet grown quite accustomed to her new dignity as a wife, and felt a certain shyness in having to announce it to Vincent.

'It was,' she said, looking down; 'it is not true now. Haven't you really heard that, Vincent?'

But, instead of reading her embarrassment aright, he saw in it an intimation that his worst fears were without foundation. He had not come too late. She was free—there was hope for him yet. But even then he did not dare to express the wild joy he felt.

'Do you mean,' he said—and his voice betrayed nothing—'that it is broken off?'

'Broken off!' she repeated with a little touch of bewilderment. 'Why—oh, Vincent, what a dreadful thing to ask! I thought you would understand, and you don't a bit. I am not engaged now, because—because this is my wedding journey!'

If Vincent had been slow to understand before, he understood now. It was all over; this was final, irrevocable. The radiant prospect which had seemed to open a moment before to his dazzled eyes had closed for ever. For a moment or two he did not speak. If he had made any sound it would have been a cry of pain; but he repressed it. That must be his secret now, and he would keep it till death. He kept it well then at least, for there was no faltering in his voice as he said slowly, 'I did not know. You will let me congratulate you, Mabel, and—and wish you every happiness.'

'Thank you, Vincent,' said Mabel not too warmly, thinking that, from so old a friend as Vincent, these felicitations were cold and conventional.

'You are happy, are you not?' he asked anxiously.

'Happier than I ever thought possible,' she said softly. 'When you see my—my husband' (she spoke the word with a pretty, shy pride), 'and know how good he is, Vincent, you will understand.' If she had ever suspected the place she filled in Vincent's heart she would have spared him this; as it was she treated him as an affectionate elder brother, who needed to be convinced that she had chosen wisely; and it was in some degree his own fault that she did so; he had never given her reason to think otherwise.

'I wish he would come; I can't think where he can be all this time,' continued Mabel. 'I want you to know one another. I am sure you will like Mark, Vincent, when you know him.'

Vincent started now unmistakably; not all his self-control could prevent that. Till that moment it had not occurred to him that Mabel's presence there, in the town where he had expected to come upon Mark, was more than a coincidence. He had been led to believe that Mark and she were not even acquainted, and even the discovery that she was married did not prepare him for something more overwhelming still.

'Mark!' he cried. 'Did you say Mark? Is that your husband's name? Not—not *Mark Ashburn*?'

'How that seems to astonish you,' said Mabel. 'But I forgot; how stupid of me! Why, you are a friend of his, are you not?'

Holroyd's anger came back to him all at once, with a deadly force that turned his heart to stone.

'I used to be,' he answered coldly, not caring very much just then in his bitterness if the scorn he felt betrayed itself or not. But Mabel took his answer literally.

'Why, of course,' she said. 'I remember we came upon your portrait once at home, and he asked if it was not you, and said you were one of his oldest friends.'

'I thought he would have forgotten that,' was all Vincent's answer.

'I am quite sure he will be very glad to welcome you back again,' said Mabel, 'and you will be glad to hear that since you saw him he has become famous. You have been so long away that you may not have heard of the great book he has written, "*Illusion*."'

'I have read it,' said Vincent shortly. 'I did not know he wrote it.'

'He did write it,' said Mabel. 'But for that we might never have known one another. He has to admit that, even though

he does try to run down his work sometimes, and insist that it has been very much overrated!'

'He says so, does he?' Vincent replied. 'Yes, I can quite understand that.'

Some intonation in his voice struck Mabel's ear. 'Perhaps you agree with him?' she retorted jealously.

Holroyd laughed harshly. 'No, indeed,' he said, 'I should be the last man in the world to do that. I only meant I could understand your husband taking that view. I read the book with intense interest, I assure you.'

'You don't speak as if you quite meant me to believe that,' she said. 'I'm afraid the book was not practical enough to please you, Vincent. Ceylon seems to have hardened you.'

'Very possibly,' he replied; and then followed a short silence, during which Mabel was thinking that he had certainly altered—hardly for the better, and Holroyd was wondering how much longer he would have to bear this. He was afraid of himself, feeling the danger of a violent outburst which might reveal her delusion with a too brutal plainness. She must know all 'some time, but not there—not then.

He had finally mastered any rebellious impulses, however, as Mabel, who had been anxiously watching the bridge for some time, went to meet someone with a glad cry of relief. He heard her making some rapid explanations, and then she returned, followed by Mark Ashburn.

Mabel's greeting told the wretched Mark that the blow had not fallen yet. Vincent evidently was determined to spare neither of them. Let him strike now, then; the less delay the better.

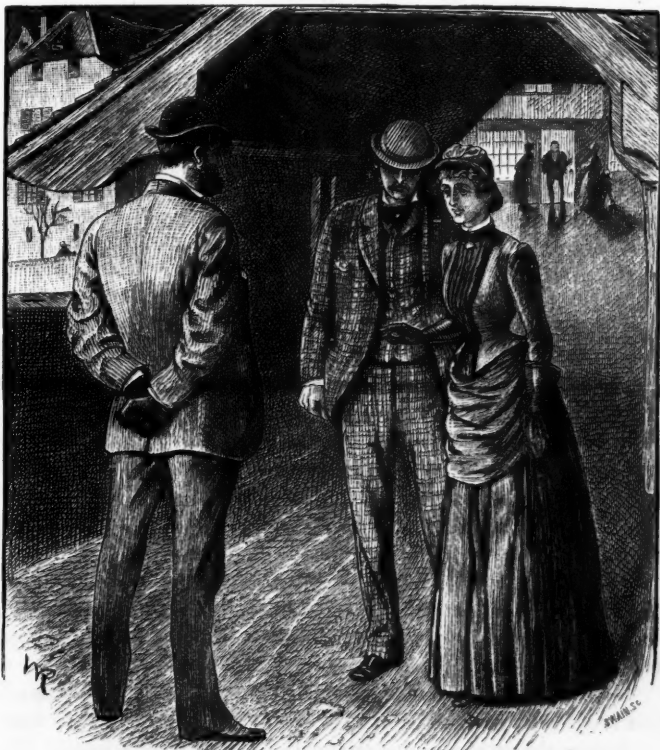
He walked up to the man who was his executioner with a dull, dogged expectation of what was coming. He tried to keep himself straight, but he felt that his head was shaking as if with palsy, and he was grateful that the dusk hid his face. 'Here is Mark, at last,' said Mabel. 'He will tell you himself that he at least has not forgotten.'

But Mark said nothing; he did not even put out his hand. He stood silently waiting for the other to speak. Vincent was silent, too, for a time, looking at him fixedly. This was how they had met, then. He had pictured that meeting many times lately, but it had never been anything like the reality. And Mabel still suspected nothing. There was a touch of comedy of a ghastly kind in the situation, which gave Vincent a grim amusement, and he felt a

savage pleasure, of which he was justly ashamed later, in developing it.

'I have been trying to explain to your wife,' he said at last, 'that I have been away so long that I could hardly hope you would remember the relations between us.'

Mark made some reply to this; he did not know what.



'At least,' Vincent continued calmly, 'I may congratulate you upon the success of your book. I should have done so when we met the other day if I had understood then that you were the author. Your modesty did not allow you to mention it, and so I discover it later.'

Mark said nothing, though his dry lips moved.

'When you met!' cried Mabel in wonder. 'Did *you* know Vincent was alive then, Mark? And you never told me!'

'He naturally did not think it would interest you, you see,' said Vincent.

'No,' said Mabel, turning to Mark, 'you couldn't know that Vincent had once been almost one of the family; I forgot that. If you had only thought of telling me!'

The two men were silent again, and Mabel felt hurt and disappointed at Vincent's want of cordiality. He seemed to take it for granted that he had been forgotten. He would thaw presently, and she did her best to bring this about by all the means in her power, in her anxiety that the man she respected should do justice to the man she loved.

That conversation was, as far as Mark was concerned, like the one described in 'Aurora Leigh'—

'Every common word
Seemed tangled with the thunder at one end,
And ready to pull down upon their heads
A terror out of sight.'

The terror was close at hand when Mabel said, in the course of her well-meant efforts to bring them into conversation, 'It was quite by accident, do you know, Mark, that Vincent should have met us here at all; he was on his way to find some man who has—I forget what you said he had done, Vincent.'

'I don't think I went into particulars,' he replied. 'I described him generally as a scoundrel. And he is.'

'I hope you were able to find that out before he could do you any injury?' said Mabel.

'Unfortunately, no,' he said. 'When I found out, the worst was done.'

'Would you rather not talk about it,' she continued, 'or do you mind telling us how you were treated?'

Vincent hesitated; just then the sense of his wrong, the sight of the man who had deceived him, made him hard as adamant. Could he desire a fuller satisfaction than was offered him now?

'It's rather a long story,' he said; 'perhaps this is not quite the place to tell it. *You* might find it interesting though from the literary point of view,' he added, turning suddenly on Mark, who did not attempt to meet his eyes.

'Tell it by all means, then,' said the latter, without moving his head.

'No; you shall hear it another time,' said Holroyd. 'Put shortly, Mabel, it's this: I trusted the other man; he deceived me. Nothing very original in that, is there?'

'I'm afraid not,' said Mabel. 'Did he rob you, Vincent? Have you lost much?'

'Much more than money! Yes, he robbed me first, and paid me the compliment of a highly artistic chain of lies afterwards. That was a needless waste; the ordinary sort of lie would have been quite enough for me—from him.'

Mark heard all this with a savage inclination at first to cut the scene short, and say to Mabel, 'He means Me. I robbed him! I lied to him! I am the scoundrel—it's all true! I own it—now let me go!'

But he let Holroyd take his own course in the end, with an apathetic acknowledgment that he had the right to revenge himself to the very utmost.

The house at the nearer end of the bridge had a small projecting gallery, where he remembered having seen a tame fox run out when he was there in the autumn before. He caught himself vaguely speculating whether the fox was there still, or if it had died; and yet he heard every word that Vincent was saying.

'And what do you mean to do with him when you meet?' asked Mabel.

'Ah,' said Vincent, 'I have thought over that a good deal. I have often wondered whether I could keep calm enough to say what I mean to say. I think I shall; in these civilised days we have to repress ourselves now and then, but that won't, of course, prevent me from punishing him as he deserves; and, when those nearest and dearest to him know him as he really is, and turn from him, even he will feel that a punishment!' (He turned to Mark again) 'Don't you agree with me?' he asked.

Mark moistened his lips before answering. 'I think you will find it very easy to punish him,' he said.

'Is he—is he married?' asked Mabel.

'Oh, yes,' said Vincent; 'I was told that his wife believes in him still.'

'And you are going to undeceive her?' she said.

'She must know the truth. That is part of his punishment,' replied Vincent.

'But it will be so terrible for her, poor thing!' said Mabel with an infinite compassion in her voice. 'What if the truth were to *kill* her?'

'Better that,' he said bitterly, 'than to go on loving a lie! Whatever happens her husband is responsible, not I. That is the correct view, Ashburn, I think?'

'Quite correct,' said Mark.

'It may be correct,' cried Mabel indignantly, 'but it is very cruel! I didn't think you could be so harsh, either of you. Of course, I don't know what the man has done; perhaps if I did I might be "correct" too. But, Vincent, I do ask you to think a little of his poor wife. She, at least, has done you no harm! Is there no way—no way at all—to get back something of what you have lost; even to punish the man, if you must, and yet spare his wife?'

'If there were,' he cried passionately, 'do you suppose I would not take it? Is it my fault that this man has done me such a wrong that he can only make amends for it by exposing himself? What can I do?'

'I suppose there is no help for it, then,' agreed Mabel reluctantly, 'but I wish she had not to suffer too. Only think what it must be to have to give up believing in one's husband!' and as she spoke she slid her confiding hand through Mark's arm.

There was another silence, and, as it seemed plain now that the interview was not likely to be a success, she made haste to end it. 'We must say good-bye now, Vincent,' she said. 'I hope you are not so harsh as your words.'

'I don't know. I feel considerably harsher just now, I think,' he said. 'Good-bye, then, Mabel. By the way, Ashburn,' he added in a slightly lowered tone, 'there is something I have to say to you.'

'I know,' muttered Mark doggedly. 'Are you going to say it now?'

'No, not now,' he answered; 'you must meet me. Where shall we say? I don't know this place—here? No, on that little terrace over there, by the fountain; it will be quieter. Be there at nine.—I am going to tell your husband the details of that story, Mabel,' he continued aloud, 'and then we shall decide what to do. You will spare him to me for half an hour?'

'Oh, yes,' said Mabel cheerfully. She thought this looked as if they were going to arrive at a better understanding. Mark

looked at Vincent, but his face was impenetrable in the dim light as he added, again in an undertone, 'You are to say nothing until I give you leave. If you are not at the place by nine, remember, I shall come to you.'

'Oh. I will be there,' said Mark recklessly; and they parted.

As Mabel and Mark were walking back, she said suddenly, 'I suppose, when you met Vincent last, you told him that you were going to marry me, Mark?'

'Didn't he say so?' he answered, prevaricating even then.

'I thought you must have done so,' she said, and was silent.

Vincent *had* known then. He had deliberately kept away from them all. He had pretended to ignore the marriage when they met; that was his way of resenting it. She had not thought of this till then, and it confirmed her in the idea that Ceylon had sadly changed him.

They dined alone together in the large bare *Speise-Saal*, for the handsome hotel was scarcely ever occupied even in the season. Now they had it all to themselves, and the waiters almost fought with one another for the privilege of attending upon them. The 'Director' himself—a lively, talkative little German, who felt his managerial talents wasted in this wilderness—came in to superintend their meals, partly to refresh himself by the contemplation of two real guests, but chiefly to extend his English vocabulary.

Hitherto Mark had considered him a nuisance, but he was glad that evening when the host followed the fish in with his customary greeting. 'Good-night! You haf made a goot walk? Guten appetit—yes?' and proceeded to invite them to a grand concert, which was to take place in the hotel the following Sunday. 'Zere vill pe ze pandt from Klein-Laufingen; it is all brass, and it is better as you vill not go too near. Zey blow vair strong ven zey go off, but a laty from hier vill gambole peautifullly after zem on ze piano. You vill come—yes?'

When he had gone at last little Max came in and stood by Mabel, with his mouth gaping like a young bird's for chance fragments of dessert. Mark was grateful to him, too, for diverting her attention from himself. He grew more and more silent as the long Black Forest clock by the shining porcelain stove ticked slowly on towards the hour. It was time to go, and he rose with a shiver.

'You will not be very long away, will you, dear?' said Mabel,

looking up from the orange she was peeling for the child. 'And you will do what you can for the poor woman, I know.'

'Yes, yes,' he said as he reached the door. 'Good-bye, Mabel!'

'Good-bye,' she said, nodding to him brightly. 'Max, say "Good-evening, Herr Mark; a pleasant walk,"' but Max backed away behind the stove, declining to commit himself to an unknown tongue. Mark took a last look at her laughing gaily there in the lamplight. Would he ever hear her laugh like that again? How would he ever find courage to tell her? There was little need just then of Holroyd's prohibition.

He went down to the hotel steps to the little open space where the two streets unite, and where the oil lamp suspended above by cords dropped a shadow like a huge spider on the pale patch of lighted ground below. The night was warm and rather dark; no one was about at that hour; the only sound was the gurgle of the fountain in the corner, where the water-jets gleamed out of the blackness like rods of twisted crystal. He entered the narrow street, or rather alley, leading to the bridge. In the state of blank misery he was in his eye seized upon the smallest objects as if to distract his mind, and he observed—as he might not have done had he been happy—that in the lighted upper room of the corner house they had trained growing ivy along the low raftered ceiling.

So, too, as he went on he noticed details in each dim small-paned shop-front he passed. The tobacconist's big wooden negro, sitting with bundles of Hamburg cigars in his lap and filling up the whole of the window; the two rows of dangling silver watches at the watchmaker's; the butcher's unglazed slab, with its strong iron bars, behind which one small and solitary joint was caged like something dangerous to society; even the grotesque forms in which the jugs and vases at the china shop were shadowed on the opposite wall.

He looked up at a quaint metal inn-sign, an ancient ship, which swung from a wrought-iron bracket overhead. 'When next I pass under that!' he thought.

He came to the end of the street at last, when his way to the place of meeting lay straight on, but he turned to his right instead, past the *Zoll-Verein*—where the chief was busy writing by the window under his linen-shaded oil-lamp—and on to the bridge as if some irresistible attraction were drawing him.

When he reached the recess opposite to that in which Mabel had met Vincent he stopped mechanically and looked around; the towns were perfectly still, save for the prolonged organ note of the falls, which soon ceases to strike the ear. On either bank the houses gleamed pale under a low sky, where the greenish moonlight struggled through a rack of angry black clouds. While he stood there the clock under the church cupola above struck the quarters and clanged out the hour, followed, after a becoming pause, by the gatehouse clock across the river and such others as the twin towns possessed.

It was nine o'clock. Vincent Holroyd was waiting there on the terrace, stern and pitiless.

Mark made a movement as if to leave the recess, and then stopped short. It was no use; he could not face Holroyd. He looked over the side, down on the water swirling by, in which the few house lights were reflected in a dull and broken glimmer. Was there escape for him there?

It would only be a plunge down into that swollen rushing torrent, and he would be past all rescue. An instant of suffocating pain, then singing in his ears, sparks in his eyes, unconsciousness—annihilation perhaps—who knew? Just then any other world, any other penalty, seemed preferable to life and Mabel's contempt!

From the recess he could see an angle of the hotel, and one of the windows of their room. It was lighted; Mabel was sitting there in the armchair, perhaps, waiting for him. If he went back he must tell her—if he went back!

Whether he lived or died, she was equally lost to him now. His life would bring her only misery and humiliation—at least he could leave her free!

Vincent would speak and think less hardly of him then, and, if not, would it matter?

His mind was made up—he would do it! He looked towards Mabel's window with a wild, despairing gaze. 'Forgive me!' he cried with a hoarse sob, as if she could hear, and then he threw off his hat and sprang upon the broad parapet.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE LAUFENPLATZ.



VINCENT had left the *Gasthaus zur Post*, the old-fashioned inn outside Klein-Laufingen, at which he had taken up his quarters for the night, a little before nine, and walked down the street, with his mind finally made up as to the course he meant to take, although he shrank from the coming interview almost as intensely as Mark himself. He passed under the covered way of the bridge, and had nearly reached the open part, when he recognised the man he was coming to meet standing in one of the recesses. He noticed him look round in evident fear of observation—he did not seem, however, to have seen or

heard Vincent, and presently the latter saw him throw his hat away, as if in preparation for action of some sort. Vincent guessed at once what he was intending to do; it darted across his mind that this might be the best solution of the difficulty—he had only to keep silent for a few seconds. Was it certain even now that he could prevent this self-destruction if he would? But such inhumanity was impossible to him. Instinctively he rushed forward out of the shadow and, seizing Mark by the arm as he sprang upon the parapet, dragged him roughly back. ‘You coward!’ he cried, ‘you fool! This is the way you keep your appointment, is it? You can do that afterwards if you like—just now you are coming with me.’

Tragic as a rash act, such as Mark was contemplating, is when successful, an interruption brings with it an inevitable bathos; when he first felt that grasp on his arm, he thought himself in the power of a German policeman, and, prepared as he was a moment before to face a sudden death, he quailed before the prospect of

some degrading and complicated official process ; it was almost a relief to see instead his bitterest enemy !

He made no attempt at resistance or escape—perhaps life seemed more tolerable after all now he had been brought back to it ; he went meekly back with Vincent, who still held his arm firmly, and they reached the Laufenplatz without another word.

The little terrace above the Rhine was almost dark, the only light came in a reflected form from a street lamp round the corner, and they had to pick their way round the octagonal stone fountain and between the big iron salmon cages, to some seats under the five bare elms by the railings. There Vincent sat down to recover breath, for the scene he had just gone through was beginning to tell upon him, and he was overcome by a feeling of faintness which made him unable to speak for some moments. Meanwhile Mark stood opposite by the railings waiting sullenly, until Vincent rose at last and came to his side ; he spoke low and with difficulty, but, in spite of the torrent roaring over the rocks below, Mark heard every word.

‘I suppose,’ Vincent began, ‘I need not tell you why I wished to see you ?’

‘No,’ said Mark ; ‘I know.’

‘From your manner on the bridge just now,’ continued Holroyd, relentlessly, ‘it looked almost as if you wished to avoid a meeting—why should you ? I told you I wished my authorship to be kept a secret, and you sheltered it with your own name. Very few friends would have done that !’

‘You have the right to indulge in this kind of pleasantry,’ said the tortured Mark ; ‘I know that—only be moderate, if you can. Cut the sneers and the reproaches short, and give me the finishing stroke ; do you suppose I don’t *feel* what I am ?’

‘Reproaches are ungenerous, of course,’ retorted Holroyd ; ‘I am coming to the “finishing stroke,” as you call it, in my own time ; but first, though you may consider it bad taste on my part, I want to know a little more about all this. If it’s painful to you, I’m sorry—but you scarcely have the right to be sensitive.’

‘Oh, I have no rights !’ said Mark, bitterly.

‘I’ll try not to abuse mine,’ said Vincent, more calmly, ‘but I can’t understand why you did this—you could write books for yourself, what made you covet mine ?’

‘I’ll tell you all there is to tell,’ said Mark ; ‘I didn’t covet your book—it was like this ; my own novels had both been rejected.

I knew I had no chance, as things were, of ever getting a publisher to look at them. I felt I only wanted a fair start. Then Fladgate got it into his head that I was the author of that manuscript of yours. I *did* tell him how it really was, but he wouldn't believe me, and then—upon my soul, Holroyd, I thought you were dead!

'And had no rights!' concluded the other drily; 'I see—go on.'

'I was mad, I suppose,' continued Mark; 'I let him think he was right. And then I met Mabel . . . by that time everybody knew me as the author of "Illusion." I—I could not tell her I was not. . . Then we were engaged, and, four days before the wedding, you came back—you know all the rest.'

'Yes, I know the rest,' cried Vincent, passionately; 'you came to meet me—how overcome you were! I thought it was joy, and thanked Heaven, like the fool I was, that I had anyone in the world to care so much about me! And you let me tell you about—about *her*; and you and Caffyn between you kept me in the dark till you could get me safely out of the way. It was a clever scheme and you managed it admirably. You need not have stolen from anyone with such powers of constructing a plot of your own! There is just one thing, though, I should like to have explained. I wrote Mabel a letter—I know now that she never received it—why?'

'How can I tell?' said Mark. 'Good God! Holroyd, you don't suspect me of *that*!'

'Are you so far above suspicion?' asked Vincent; 'it would only be a very few more pages!'

'Well, I deserve it,' said Mark, 'but whether you believe me or not, I never saw a letter of yours until the other day. I never imagined you were alive even till I read your letter to me.'

'That must have been a delightful surprise for you,' said Vincent; 'you kept your head though—you did not let it interfere with your arrangements. You have married her—you—of all the men in the world! Nothing can ever undo that now—nothing!'

'I have married her,' said Mark; 'God forgive me for it! But at least she cares for no one else, Holroyd. She loves me—whatever I am!'

'You need not tell me that,' interrupted Vincent; 'I know it. I have seen it for myself—you have been clever even in that!'

'What do you mean?' asked Mark.

'Do you know what that book of mine was to me?' continued

Vincent, without troubling to answer; 'I put all that was best of myself into it, I thought it might plead for me some day, perhaps, to a heart I hoped to touch; and I come back to find that you have won the heart, and not even left me my book!'

'As for the book,' said Mark, 'that will be yours again now.'

'I meant to make it so when I came here,' Vincent answered. 'I meant to force you to own my rights, whatever the acknowledgment cost you. . . But I know now that I must give that up. I abandon all claim to the book; you have chosen to take it—you can keep it!'

The revulsion of feeling caused by so unexpected an announcement almost turned Mark's head for the moment; he caught Vincent by the arm in his excitement: 'What,' he cried, 'is this a trick—are you in earnest—you will spare me after all? You must not, Vincent, I can't have it—I don't deserve it!'

Vincent drew back coldly: 'Did I say you deserved it?' he asked, with a contempt that stung Mark.

'Then I won't accept it, do you hear?' he persisted; 'you shall not make this sacrifice for me!'

Holroyd laughed grimly enough: 'For you!' he repeated; 'you don't suppose I should tamely give up everything for you, do you?'

'Then,' faltered Mark, 'why—why—?'

'Why am I going to let you alone? Do you remember what I told you on that platform at Plymouth?—that is why. If I had only known then, I would have fought my hardest to expose you, if it was necessary to save her in that way—for her sake, not mine. I don't suppose there ever was much hope for me. As it is, you have been clever enough to choose the one shield through which I can't strike you—if I ever thought more of that wretched book than of her happiness, it was only for a moment—she knows nothing as yet, and she must never know!'

'She will know it some day,' said Mark, heavily.

'Why should she know?' demanded Vincent, impatiently; 'you don't mean that that infernal Caffyn knows?'

'No, no,' replied Mark in all sincerity; 'Caffyn doesn't know—how could he? But you can't hide these things: you—you may have talked about it yourself already!'

'I have not talked about it!' said Vincent sharply; 'perhaps I was not too proud of having been gulled so easily. Can't you understand? This secret rests between you and me at present, and

I shall never breathe a word of it—you can feel perfectly safe—you are Mabel's husband!

It is to be feared that Vincent's manner was far enough from the sublime and heroic; he gave up his book and his fame from the conviction that he could not do otherwise; but it was not easy for all that, and he did not try to disguise the bitter contempt he felt for the cause.

Mark could not endure the humiliation of such a pardon—his spirit rose in revolt against it.

'Do you think I will be forgiven like this,' he cried recklessly. 'I don't want your mercy. I won't take it! If you won't speak, I shall!'

Vincent had not expected any resistance from Mark, and this outburst, which was genuine enough, showed that he was not utterly beneath contempt, even then.

Holroyd's manner was less harsh and contemptuous when he next spoke:

'It's no use, Ashburn,' he said firmly; 'it's too late for all that now—you *must* accept it!'

'I shall not,' said Mark again. 'I've been a scoundrel, I know, but I'll be one no longer; I'll tell the truth and give you back your own. I will do what's right at last!'

'Not in that way,' said Vincent; 'I forbid it. I have the right to be obeyed in this, and you shall obey me. Listen to me, Ashburn; you can't do this—you forget Mabel. You have made her love you and trust her happiness to your keeping; your honour is hers now. Can't you see what shame and misery you will plunge her in by such a confession? It may clear your conscience, but it must darken her life—and that's too heavy a price to pay for such a mere luxury as peace of mind.'

'How can I go on deceiving her?' groaned Mark; 'it will drive me mad!'

'It will do nothing of the sort!' retorted Holroyd, his anger returning; 'I know you better—in a couple of days it won't even affect your appetite! Why, if I had not come over here, if I had gone out again to India as you hoped I should, you were prepared to go on deceiving her—your mind kept its balance well enough then!'

Mark knew this was true, and held his tongue.

'Think of me as safe in India, then,' Vincent continued more quietly. 'I shall trouble you quite as little. But this secret is

mine as well as yours—and I will not have it told. If you denounce yourself now who will be the better for it? Think what it will cost Mabel. . . . You *do* love her, don't you?' he asked, with a fierce anxiety; 'you—you have not married her for other reasons?'

'You think I am too bad even to love honestly!' said Mark, bitterly,—'but I do!'

'Prove it then,' said Vincent; 'you heard her pleading on the bridge for the woman who would suffer by her husband's shame—she was pleading for herself then—and not to me only, to you! Have pity on her; she ~~is~~ so young to lose all her faith and love and hope at once. You can never let her know what you have been; you can only try to become all she believes you to be!'

In his heart, perhaps, Mark was not sorry to be convinced that what he had resolved to do was impossible; the high-strung mood in which he had been ready to proclaim his wrong-doing was already passing away—Vincent had gained his point.

'You are right,' Mark said slowly; 'I *will* keep it from her if I can.'

'Very well,' Vincent answered, 'that is settled then; if she asks you what has passed between us, you can say that I have told you my story, but that you are not at liberty to speak of it. Mabel will not try to know more. Stay, I will write a line' (and he went to the corner of the street and wrote a few words on a leaf from his note-book). 'Give that to her,' he said, as he returned, 'and now I think we've nothing more to say.'

'Only one other thing,' stammered Mark; 'I must do this. . . . When they—they published your book, they paid me. . . . I never touched the money, I have brought it with me to-night—you must take it!' and he held out a small packet of notes.

Vincent turned haughtily away. 'Excuse me,' he said, 'it is not mine; I will have nothing to do with it—under the circumstances you can't expect me to touch that money. Keep it, do what you choose with it!'

'I choose this, then,' said Mark violently, and tearing the notes up, he flung them over the railings to drift down on the rocks or into the tossing grey foam beyond.

'You need not have done that,' said Holroyd, coldly, 'there were the poor; but just as you please!' and he made a movement as if to go.

Mark stopped him with a gesture:

'Are you going like this?' he said, and his voice trembled; 'if you knew all I felt, even you might pity me a little! Can't you forgive?'

Vincent turned. 'No,' he said, shortly, 'I can't. I put temptation in your way, and though I never dreamed then that it could be a temptation to you, I could have forgiven you for giving way to it when you believed me dead. But I came back, and you went on with it—you lied to me—more, you dared to marry *her*—without a care for the shame and sorrow which was all you had to bring her. If I said I forgave you for that, it would be a mockery—I don't and I can't!'

'I see,' said Mark; 'when we meet again we are to be strangers, then?'

'No,' said Vincent; 'if we meet, we must do so as ordinary acquaintances—for Mabel's sake; but there are no appearances to keep up here. Can't you see I want to be left to myself!' he asked, with a sudden burst of nervous irritation.

'Have your way, then!' said Mark, and left him there by the railings.

Mark's first feelings, as he walked slowly back up the little street, where the little shops were all shuttered and dark now, were by no means enviable; he felt infinitely mean and small in his own eyes, and shrank from entering Mabel's presence while his nerves were still crawling under the scorching contempt of Vincent's dismissal. If, during the interview, there had been moments when he was deeply contrite and touched at the clemency so unexpectedly shown him, the manner of his pardon seemed to release him from all obligations to gratitude—he had only been forgiven for another's sake, and for a time he almost loathed so disgraceful an immunity, and felt the deep humiliation of a sentence that condemned him 'to pay the price of lies by being constrained to lie on still.' But by degrees, even in that short walk, his elastic temperament began to assert itself; after all, it might have been worse! He might by now have been drifting, dead and disfigured, down the river to Basle; he might have been going back to Mabel with the fearful necessity upon him of telling her all that night. One person knew him and despised him for what he was—but that person would never tell his secret! That painful scene which had just passed would never have to be gone through again; he could think of it as a horrible dream. Yes, he was safe now, *really* safe this time; his position was far more

secure than when he had read that telegram of Caffyn's—and here he wondered, for the first time, whether Caffyn had been deliberately misled or only mistaken in sending such a delusive message—but that did not very much matter now, and he soon abandoned speculation on the subject. He had much to be thankful for; his future was free from all danger; he had had a severe lesson, and he would profit by it; henceforth (with the one necessary reservation) he would be honest and true; Mabel should never repent her trust in him! 'Sweet Bells Jangled' would be before the world by the time they returned, and after that he feared nothing. And so, though he was subdued and silent on his return, there was no other trace in his manner of what he had suffered during the last hour; he found Mabel by the window of their sitting-room, looking out at the houses across the river, which were now palely clear in the cold moonlight, their lights extinguished, and only a pane glittering here and there in some high dormer window, while the irregular wooden galleries and hanging out-houses were all thrown up vividly by the intense shadows.

'What a very long time you have been away!' she said; 'but I know Vincent can be very pleasant and interesting if he likes.'

'Very,' said Mark, and gave her Holroyd's note.

'I leave here early for Italy to-morrow,' she read, 'and may not see you again for some little time. I have told your husband my story, but, on consideration, have thought it best to pledge him to tell no one—not even you. But the man who injured me shall be safe for your sake.'

'You *did* persuade him, then!' she said, looking up gratefully to Mark; 'oh, I am glad! How good you are, and how well you must have spoken, dear, to make him give up his idea of punishing the man! So Vincent is going away at once—do you know, I am afraid I am rather glad?'

And Mark made no answer—what was there to say?

Vincent stood there by the railings on the Laufenplatz for some time after Mark had left him; he was feeling the reaction both in mind and body from his recent conflict. 'How will it all end?' he asked himself, wearily. 'Can any good come from letting this deceit go on? Is he strong enough to carry out his part? If not, the truth will only come at last, and be even more cruel when it does come!' Yet he had done what still seemed the obvious and only thing to do, if Mabel's happiness was con-

sidered ; he was ashamed even that he had not seen it earlier, and trembled as he remembered that only a providential chance had restrained him from some fatal disclosure to Mabel that afternoon on the bridge. But at least he had acted for the best, and he would hope for it.

Thinking thus, he recrossed the river to Klein-Laufingen, where a mounted German officer, many sizes too big for the little street, was rousing it from its first slumber, as he clattered along with his horse's hoofs striking sparks from the rough cobbles, and passed under the old gateway, where his accoutrements gleamed for an instant in the lamplight before horse and rider vanished in the darkness beyond. Vincent passed out too, out on the broad, white road, and down the hill to his homely *Gasthaus*. He felt weak and very lonely—lonelier even than when he had parted from Mabel long ago on the eve of his Ceylon voyage ; he could hope then—now he had lost her for ever ! Still, one of his wishes had been granted—he had been able to be of service to her, to make some sacrifice for her dear sake ; she would never know either of his love or his sacrifice, and though he could not pretend that there was no bitterness in that, he felt that it was better thus. ‘After all,’ he thought, ‘she loves that fellow—she would never have cared for me !’ And there was truth in this last conclusion ; even if Mabel and Mark had never met, and she could have known Vincent as he was, the knowledge might not have taught her to love. A woman cannot give her heart as a *prix Montyon*—or there might be more bachelors than there are.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MISSED FIRE!



IT

WAS an evening early in May, and Harold Caffyn was waiting at Victoria for the arrival of the Dover train, which was bringing back Mark and Mabel from the Continent. This delicate attention on his part was the result of a painful uncertainty which had been vexing him ever since the morning on which he read Vincent's farewell note at Wastwater. 'It is a poor tale,' as Mrs. Poyser might say, to throw your bomb and never have the satisfaction of hearing it explode—and yet that was his position; he had 'shot his arrow into the air,' like Longfellow; but, less fortunate than the poet, he was anything but sure that his humble effort had reached 'the heart of a friend.' Now

he was going to know. One thing he had ascertained from the Langtons—Vincent Holroyd had certainly followed the couple to Laufingen, and they had seen him there—Harold had found Mrs. Langton full of the wonderful news of the return of the dead. But nothing had come of it as yet; if there was a sensation in store for the literary world, Mabel's letters apparently contained no hint of it, and for a time Caffyn felt unpleasantly apprehensive that there might have been a hitch somehow in his admirable arrangements. Then he reflected that Mabel would naturally spare her mother as long as possible; he would not believe that after all the trouble he had taken, after Holroyd had actually hunted down the culprit, the secret could have been kept from her any longer. No, she must know the real truth, though she might be proud enough to mask her sufferings while she could. But still he longed for some visible assurance that his revenge had not unaccountably failed; and, as he had ascertained that they were to return on this particular evening,

and were not to be met except by the Langton carriage, it occurred to him that here would be an excellent opportunity of observing Mabel at a time when she would not imagine it necessary to wear a mask. He would take care to remain unseen himself; a single glance would tell him all he needed to know, and he promised himself enjoyment of a refined and spiritual kind in reading the effects of his revenge on the vivid face he had loved once, and hated now with such malignant intensity. The train came in with a fringe of expectant porters hanging on the footboards, and as the doors flew open to discharge a crowd, flurried but energetic, like stirred ants, even Caffyn's well-regulated pulse beat faster.

He had noticed Champion waiting on the platform and kept his eye upon him in the bustle that followed; he was going up to a compartment now—that must be Mark he was touching his hat to as he received directions; Caffyn could not see Mark's face yet as his back was towards him, but he could see Mabel's as she stepped lightly out on the platform—there was a bright smile on her face as she acknowledged the footman's salute, and seemed to be asking eager questions. Caffyn felt uncomfortable, for there was nothing forced about her smile, no constraint in her eyes as she turned to Mark when they were alone again, and seemed to be expressing her eager delight at being home again. And Mark, too, had the face of a man without a care in the world—something must have gone wrong, terribly wrong, it was clear! They were coming towards him; he had meant to avoid them at first, but now his curiosity would not allow this, and he threw himself in their way, affecting an artless surprise and pleasure at being the first to welcome them back. Mark did not appear at all disconcerted to see him, and Mabel could not be frigid to anybody just then in the flush of happy expectation, which she did not try to conceal; altogether it was a bitter disappointment to Caffyn.

He quite gasped when Mark said, with a frank unconsciousness, and without waiting for the subject to be introduced by him, 'Oh, I say, Caffyn, what on earth made you think poor old Vincent was going back to India at once? He's not going to do anything of the kind; he's wandering about the Continent. We knocked up against him at Laufenen!'

Caffyn gave a searching look at Mabel's sweet, tranquil face, then at Mark's, which bore no sign of guilt or confusion. 'Knocked

up against you!' he repeated; 'why—why, didn't he *expect* to find you there, then?'

Mabel answered this: 'It was quite an accident that he stopped at Laufingen at all,' she said; 'he was going on to Italy.'

Caffyn did not give up even then—he tried one last probe:



'Of course,' he said; 'I forgot, your husband kept him so completely in the dark about it all—eh, Mark? Why, when you got him to come down to Wastwater with me, he had no idea what festivities were in preparation—had he?'

'No, my boy,' said Mark, with a perfectly natural and artistic laugh; 'I really don't believe he had—you mustn't be shocked, darling,' he added to Mabel; 'it was all for his good, poor fellow.'

I must tell you some day about our little conspiracy. It's all very well for you, though,' he turned to Caffyn again, 'to put it all on to me—you had more to do with it than I—it was your own idea, you know!'

'Oh!' said Caffyn; 'well, if you like to put it in that way——.' He lost his self-possession completely—there was something in all this he could not at all understand.

The fact was that Mark felt himself able now to face the whole world with equanimity; the knowledge that no one would ever detect him made him a consummate actor. He had long made up his mind how he would greet Caffyn when they met again, and he was delighted to find himself so composed and equal to the occasion.

Caffyn stood looking after the carriage as it drove away with them; he had quite lost his bearings: the paper in Holroyd's hand, Mark's own behaviour in so many instances, Vincent's rapid pursuit, had all seemed to point so clearly to one conclusion—yet what was he to think now? He began for the first time to distrust his own penetration; he very much feared that his elaborate scheme of revenge was a failure, that he must choose some other means of humbling Mabel, and must begin all over again, which was a distressing thought to a young man in his situation. He was glad now that he had never talked of his suspicions, and had done nothing openly compromising. He would not give up even yet, until he had seen Holroyd, and been able to pump him judiciously; until then he must bear the dismal suspicion that he had overreached himself.

One of his shafts at least had not fallen altogether wide, for as Mark and Mabel were being driven home across the Park, she said suddenly: 'So *Harold* knew that Vincent was alive, then?'

'Yes,' said Mark, '*he* knew,' and he looked out of the window at the sunset as he spoke.

'And you and Harold kept him from hearing of our wedding?' she said. 'Mark, I thought you said that you had told him?'

'Oh, no,' said Mark; 'you misunderstood—there—there were reasons.'

'Tell me them,' said Mabel.

'Well,' said Mark, 'Vincent was ill—anyone could see that what he wanted was rest, and that the fatigue and—and—the excitement of a wedding would be too much for him—Caffyn wanted

a companion up at Wastwater, and begged me to say nothing about our marriage just then, and leave it to him to tell him quietly later on—that's all, darling.'

'I don't like it, dear,' said Mabel; 'I don't like your joining Harold in a thing like that. I know you did it all for the best, but I don't see why you could not have told him; if he was not well enough to come to the wedding we should have understood it!'

'Perhaps you're right,' said Mark easily, 'but, at all events, no harm has come of it to anybody. How they are thinning the trees along here, aren't they? Just look along that avenue!'

And Mabel let him turn the conversation from a subject she was glad enough to forget.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LITTLE GIFTS.



NE bright morning in May, not long after the return from the Continent, Mabel was sitting in her own room at the back of the small house which had been taken on Campden Hill; she was writing at a table by the raised window, when the door opened suddenly, and Mark burst in, in a state of suppressed but very evident excitement. 'I have brought you something!' he said, and threw down three peacock-blue volumes upon her open blotting-case; the title, 'Sweet Bells Jangled,' ran in sprawling silver letters from corner to corner of the covers, through a medley of cracked

bells and withered hyacinths in dull gold; the general effect being more bold than pleasing. Mabel was just about to exclaim sympathetically, 'What a frightful binding they've given you, dear!' when Mark informed her, with some complacency, that it was his own design. 'Nowadays, you see,' he explained, 'you want something to catch the eye, or you won't be read!'

Inwardly Mabel could not help wondering that he could condescend to such a device, or think it necessary in his own case. 'Look at the fly-leaf,' he said, and she opened the first volume, and read the printed dedication, '*To my Wife.*' 'I thought that must bring me luck,' he said; 'and now, darling, do you know what you are going to do? You are going to put away all those confounded letters and sit down here, and read the opening chapters carefully, and tell me what you think of them.' For till then he had made continual excuses for not showing her any portion of his new work, either in manuscript or proof, from mixed motives of vanity and diffidence.

Mabel laughed with affectionate pride at his anxiety: 'This is what comes of marrying a great author!' she said; 'go away and let me begin at once, and tell you at lunch how I enjoyed it.'

'No,' said Mark despotically, 'I'm going to stay here—or you might try to skip.'

'But I can't allow that,' she protested; 'suppose I find I'm obliged to skip—suppose it's a terrible disappointment? No, you ridiculous Mark, I didn't mean it—stay if you like, I'm not a bit afraid of being disappointed—though I really would enjoy it best in solitude!'

Mark insisted; he felt that at last he was about to be reinstated in his own opinion, he could wait no longer for the assurance of triumph; when he saw with his own eyes the effect of his genius upon Mabel, when he read the startled delight and growing admiration in her face, then at last he would know that he was not actually an impostor!

There are many methods of self-torture, but perhaps few more ingenious and protracted than submitting the result of one's brain-work to a person whose good opinion we covet, and watching the effect. Mark imposed it on himself, nevertheless, chiefly because in his heart he had very little fear of the result. He took a rocking-chair and sat down opposite Mabel, trying to read the paper; by-and-by, as she read on in silence, his heart began to beat and he rocked himself nervously, while his eyes kept wandering from the columns to the pretty hands supporting the volume which hid Mabel's face. Hands reveal many things, and Mabel's could be expressive enough at times—but they told him nothing then; he watched them turn a leaf from time to time, they always did so deliberately, almost caressingly, he thought, but with no eagerness—although the opening was full of incident. He calculated

that she must be at a place where there was a brilliant piece of humorous description; she had a fair share of humour—why didn't she laugh?

'Have you got to that first appearance of the Curate on the tennis-ground?' he asked at last.

She laid down the volume for an instant, and he saw her eyes—they were calm and critical; her mouth did not look even as if it had been smiling. 'Past that! I am beginning Chapter Three,' she said.

The second chapter had contained some of his most sparkling and rollicking writing—and it had not even moved her to smile! He consoled himself with the reflection that the robust humour never does appeal to women. He had begun his third chapter with a ludicrous anecdote which, though it bordered on the profane, he had considered too good to be lost, but now he had misgivings.

'I'm afraid,' he ventured dubiously, 'you won't quite like that bit about the bishop, darling?'

'I'm afraid I don't, quite,' she replied from behind the book. The story had no real harm in it, even in Mabel's eyes; the only pity was that in any part of 'Illusion' it would have been an obvious blot—and that it did not seem out of keeping in the pages she was reading now.

She had sat down to read with such high hopes, so sure an anticipation of real enjoyment, that it was hard to find that the spell was broken; she tried to believe that she read on because she was interested—her real reason was a dread of some pause, when she would be asked to give her opinion. What should she say?

Perhaps it should be explained at once that the book was not a foolish one; Mark, whatever else he was, could scarcely be called a fool, and had a certain share of the literary faculty; it was full of smart and florid passages that had evidently been industriously polished, and had something of the perishable brilliancy of varnish. There is a kind of vulgarity of mind so subtle as to resist every test but ink, and the cheap and flashy element in Mark's nature had formed a deposit, slight, perhaps, but perceptible in more than one page of 'Sweet Bells Jangled.' Mabel felt her heart grow heavier as she read. Why had he chosen to deliberately lower his level like this? Where were the strong and masterly touch, the tenderness and the dignity of his first book? That had faults, too, even faults of taste—but here the faults had

almost overgrown the taste! Surely if she read on, she would find the style attain the old distinction, and the tone grow noble and tender once again—but she read on, and the style was always the same, and the tone, if anything, rather worse!

Mark had long since moved to a spot where he could command her face; her fine eyebrows were slightly drawn, her long lashes



lowered, and her mouth compressed as if with pain—somehow the sight did not encourage him. She was becoming conscious that her expression was being closely watched, which seldom adds a charm to reading, and at last she could persevere no longer, and shut the book with a faint sigh.

‘Well,’ said Mark desperately; he felt as if his fate hung on her answer.

'I—I—have read so little yet,' she said; 'let me tell you what I think at the end!'

'Tell me what you think of it so far,' said Mark.

'*Must I?*' she said, almost imploringly.

'Yes,' said Mark, with a grating attempt at a laugh; 'put me out of my misery!'

She loved him too well to make some flattering or evasive reply—she was jealous for his reputation, and could not see him peril it without a protest. 'Oh, Mark,' she cried, locking her hands and pressing them tight together, 'you must feel yourself—it is not your best—you have done such great work—you will again, I know, dear—but this, it is not worthy of you—it is not worthy of "Illusion"!'

He knew too well that it was his best, that it was not in him to do better; if the world's verdict agreed with hers, he was a failure indeed. He had been persuading himself that, after all, he was not a common impostor, that he had genius of his own which would be acknowledged far above his friend's talent; now all at once the conviction began to crumble.

He turned upon her with a white face and a look of anger and mortification in his eyes. 'The first is always the best, of course,' he said bitterly; 'that is the regulation verdict. If "*Sweet Bells*" had come first, and "*Illusion*" second, you would have seen this sad falling off in the *second* book. I did not think *you* would be the first to take up that silly old cry, Mabel—I thought I could always come to my wife for encouragement and appreciation; it seems I was mistaken!'

Mabel bit her lip, and her eyes were dazzled for a moment: 'You asked me what I thought,' she said in a low voice; 'do you think it was pleasant to tell you? When you ask me again, I shall know better how you expect to be answered!'

He felt all at once what he had done, and hastened to show his penitence; she forgave, and did not let him see how deeply she had been wounded—only from that day some of the poetry of her life had turned to prose. Of '*Sweet Bells Jangled*' she never spoke again, and he did not know whether she ever read it to the end or not.

They had finished breakfast one Saturday morning, and Mark was leisurely cutting the weekly reviews, when he suddenly sheltered himself behind the paper he had been skimming—'*Sweet Bells*' was honoured with a long notice. His head swam

as he took in the effect with some effort. The critic was not one of those fallen angels of literature who rejoice over an unexpected recruit; he wrote with a kindly recollection of 'Illusion,' and his condemnation was sincerely reluctant; still, it was unmixed condemnation, and ended with an exhortation to the author to return to the 'higher and more artistic aims' of his first work. Mark's hand shook till the paper rustled when he came to that; he was so long silent that Mabel looked up from reading her letters, and asked if the new book was reviewed yet.

'Reviewed yet!' said Mark from behind the article; 'why, it hasn't been out a fortnight.'

'I know,' said Mabel, 'but I thought perhaps that, after "Illusion"——'

'Every book has to wait its turn!' said Mark, as he saved himself with all the reviews, and locked himself in the little study where he sketched out the stories to which he had not as yet found appropriate endings.

There was another notice amongst the reviews, but in that the critic was relentless in pointing out that the whilom idol had feet of clay—and enormous ones; after a very severe elaboration of the faults, the critic concluded: 'It almost seems as though the author, weary of the laudation which accompanied the considerable (if, in some degree, accidental) success of his first book, had taken this very effectual method of rebuking the enthusiasm. However this may be, one more such grotesque and ill-considered production as that under review, and we can promise him an instant cessation of all the inconveniences of popularity.'

Mark crumpled up the paper and pitched it to the other end of the room in a fury—it was a conspiracy, they were writing him down—oh, the malice and cowardice of it! He destroyed both reviews lest Mabel should see her opinion confirmed, and her faith in him should be shaken.

However, sundry copies of the reviews in question were forwarded to him by good-natured people who thought it might amuse him to see them, and one was even sent to Mabel with red chalk crosses in thoughtful indication of the more unpleasant passages; she saw the date, and remembered it as the day on which Mark had fenced himself in at breakfast. She came in with the paper as he sat in his study, and putting one hand on his shoulder, bent over him with a loving reproach in her eyes: 'Someone has just sent me this,' she said; 'you have seen it I

know. Why didn't you trust me, dear? Why have you let this come from others. Never try to hide things from me again, Mark—not even for my good! and—and after this let us share everything—sorrow and all—together!’ She kissed him once on the forehead, and left him there to his own thoughts.

Why, thought Mabel, was he not strong enough to disregard criticism if he was satisfied with his own work, as he evidently was? She hated to think of his having tried to keep their notices from her in that weak, almost underhand, way; she knew that the motive was not consideration for her feelings, and had to admit sadly that her hero was painfully human after all.

Still ‘Illusion’ had revealed a nature the nobility of which no weaknesses could obscure, and if his daily life did not quite bear out such indications, he was Mark Ashburn, and she loved him. Nothing could alter that!

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Some weeks later Vincent returned from Italy, and one of the first persons he met was Harold Caffyn. It was in the City, where Vincent had had business, and he attempted at first to pass the other by with the curtest possible recognition; he had never understood his conduct in the Wastwater episode, and still resented it. But Caffyn would not allow himself to be cut, and his greeting was blandly affectionate as he accused his friend of abandoning him up in the Lake district; he was determined, if he could, to convince Holroyd that his silence as to Mabel's impending marriage had been due solely to consideration for his feelings, and then, when confidence was restored, he could sound him upon the result of his journey to Laufingen. But Vincent, from a vague feeling of distrust, was on his guard. Caffyn got nothing out of him, even by the most ingenious pumping; he gathered that he had met Mark at Laufingen; but with all his efforts he was not able to discover if that meeting had really been by accident or design. He spoke casually of ‘Illusion,’ but Vincent showed no particular emotion.

‘I suppose you don't know,’ he added, ‘that Mrs. Featherstone has done it the honour of making a play of it—it's going to be done at the end of the season at their house, before a select party of distinguished sufferers.’

Holroyd had not heard that.

‘I've been let in for it,’ Caffyn continued; ‘I'm playing that

stick of a poet, "Julian," the beggar's name is; it's my last appearance on the boards, till I come out as Benedick—but that won't interest you, and it's a sort of secret at present.'

Vincent was not curious, and asked no questions.

'Who do you think is to be the Beaumelle, though?' said Caffyn; 'the author's own wife! Romantic that, eh? She's not half bad at rehearsals; you must come and see us, my boy!'

'Perhaps I shall,' said Vincent, mechanically, and left him, as much at fault as ever, but resolved to have patience still.

Caffyn's was a nature that liked tortuous ways for their own sake; he had kept his suspicions to himself hitherto, he was averse to taking any direct action until he was quite sure of his ground. He had those papers in Holroyd's writing, it was true, but he had begun to feel that they were not evidence enough to act on. If by some extraordinary chance they were quite compatible with Mark's innocence, then if he brought a charge against him, or if any slanderous insinuations were traced to him, he would be placed in an extremely awkward and invidious position. 'If I'm right,' he thought, 'Master Vincent's playing some deep game of his own—it may be mine for all I know; at all events I'll lie low till I can find out where the cards are, and whether an ace or two has got up my sleeve.'

Vincent had been able to speak with perfect calmness of his lost book, because he had almost brought himself to a philosophic indifference regarding it, the more easily as he had had consoling indications lately that his creative power had not been exhausted with that one effort, and that with returning health he might yet do good work in the world.

But now, as he walked on after leaving Caffyn, this indifference suddenly vanished; his heart beat with a secret and exquisite bliss, as he thought of this play in which Mabel was to represent his own heroine. To hear that his work was to receive the rather moderate distinction which can be conferred by its dramatisation on a private stage would scarcely have elated him under ordinary circumstances; it was no longer any concern of his at all. Still he could not resist the subtle flattery in the knowledge that his conception was about to be realised in a manner for which few authors would dare to hope—the woman who had inspired it would lend it all her own grace and beauty and tenderness to fill the faint outline he had traced with such loving pains. All the banality of private theatricals could not spoil that—she need not

even act, she had only to be her own sweet self to give life and charm to the poorest play, and the most incompetent of performances. And then, as he thought of it, a wild longing came over him to be there and see her; there might be something grotesque, and, under the circumstances, almost undignified in such a longing now, but it possessed him nevertheless. He would not betray himself or Mark, but this one gratification he hungered for, and neither pride nor prudence had power to restrain him.

He had meant to see as little as possible of Mabel on his return, but he broke this resolution now. He would not keep away, he thought; surely he could trust himself to bear the sight of her happiness; it ought to reconcile him more fully to all he had endured to secure it, and then he would be able to find out from her if this, which he had heard from Caffyn, was really true.

And so, having procured the address from Mrs. Langton, he went on that same afternoon to Campden Hill, not knowing, nor indeed greatly caring just then, that this was not the way to deaden the pain at his heart.

(To be continued.)



THE CAPITAL OF THE MIKADOS.

Of all the towns in Japan accessible to the foreigner Kioto is by far the most interesting. Compared with it, in point of years, Tokio is but a stripling, and Yokohama a puny infant. When, in 1590, Tokio (then known as Yedo) was made the capital of Eastern Japan, Kioto had been Miyako, or residence of the sovereign, for 800 years. This far-reaching antiquity is modified by the fact that Kioto has many times received the baptism of fire. Like all Japanese towns, it has been burnt several times, and what the fire has not destroyed at one time it has attacked at another. The Palace itself has been destroyed by fire six times within the last 180 years. As for the city, so recently as 1864 it was half burnt, as an episode in the Civil War. Nevertheless, it preserves in unmistakeable manner its old-time look. It lies in a valley, with a chain of hills almost encircling it. Through its midst flows the Kamo-Gawa, after the summer rains a noble river, but in November, when I saw it, a streamlet trickling through a wide bed of pebbles, apparently in imminent danger of losing its way.

There is no European quarter in Kioto, and, judging from the behaviour of the natives, I should say that the average of Europeans finding their way thither in the course of a year is small. We did a good deal of miscellaneous shopping, and wherever we went there assembled a crowd of people, of all ages and both sexes. They were very quiet and not intentionally rude, but their capacity for a prolonged steady stare is infinite. What they saw did not—at least, not immediately—suggest interchange of remark. They did not whisper or point with finger. They just stood and dumbly stared, watching every slightest motion or gesture of the strange beings who had dropped from heaven knows where upon the streets of their city.

On the night of our arrival we went to a barber's shop for a shave, necessary after four days' travel. As our jinrickshas drew up at the barber's shop, the crowd began to gather, and when it was discovered that two Englishmen were actually about to be shaved, the excitement throughout the quarter deepened in intensity. The crowd blocked up the narrow street, those behind trying to see over the heads of others in front, whilst the thrice-

fortunate ones in the first line flattened their noses against the window and steamed it with their breath. Inside the shop there was a reflex of the excitement. The barber himself, though pale, was collected in manner, and gave me only one gash. But his whole family were ranged in a group in the kitchen, which opened into the shop. The assistants stood around, from time to time handing unnecessary articles to the operator. The most hopeless case was the small boy, whose duty it was to stand by and hand paper, combs, brush, towel, or whatever might be needed by the barber. He stood at the elbow of the chair whilst I was being shaved, with his face half a foot from mine, his lips slightly parted, and a pair of great brown eyes unnaturally extended fixed on my face. I fancy he was in a condition of modified catalepsy. At any rate, he neither moved nor spoke whilst the barber rasped me, and when I vacated the chair in favour of the young gentleman from Glasgow he began afresh on him.

It was the most villanous shave I ever suffered. A dinner-knife would have been for the purpose a luxurious article compared with the razor. I besought the barber to let me off, but without avail. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, and he would not limit its duration by any voluntary act. We had brought Ito, our guide, with us, a necessary precaution; otherwise before we could have made our protest understood we might have had a few bald places artistically arranged on our heads, and perhaps our eyebrows shaved off in the manner of the Japanese. After much haranguing, Ito induced the man to let me go, to the manifest disappointment of the crowd, who were only consoled by seeing the young gentleman from Glasgow take the chair. Finally the barber charged one and eightpence for his fiendish work, which, considering we had left the United States, seemed dear for a shave. The price to a native would have been twopence halfpenny at most, and he would, in addition, have had his ears and nostrils shaved and his hair brushed and oiled. This was noticeable as the only attempt to charge extra to a foreigner which came under my personal notice in Japan.

The streets of Kioto are not quite so densely crowded as those of Tokio, but there is about them the same air of good-humoured bustle. Kioto has the advantage of larger masses and greater variety of colour. In Tokio, Yokohama, and throughout the north generally, it is not good taste to dress in colours. The Empress, it is true, comes out on state occasions in a blaze of glory. But

that is the exception to her habitude, she being on other occasions dressed with the quiet good taste of Japanese ladies in the north. Dark blue, unrelieved by any variety, is the ordinary walking dress of the ladies, and women in lower stations adopt the custom. The southern blood of the Kioto ladies revels in colours of brighter hue. A peacock is nothing to a Kioto girl out for the day. A paroquet is more closely imitated in respect of plumage. Bright reds, violets, greens, and yellows are frequently seen adorning the same little person. Where matronhood suggests greater sobriety, the average is struck with the assistance of the baby. Children are dressed in the most fantastic style, looking like little cardinals as they play about the streets in long wadded robes of many colours. It is notable that, whilst in the north women and children carrying infants on their back, wrap them closely up within their dress, so that nothing but a little round head is visible, the Kioto women, whilst obliged to enclose the babe within their garment, are careful to leave hanging loosely outside in full view the child's cloak. A purple cloak picked out with red and lavishly turned up with yellow at the sleeves is too precious a gift to be withheld from the enjoyment of the public.

There are some pretty girls in Tokio and Yokohama, and there are some ugly ones in Kioto. Eight out of every ten girls met in the streets of Kioto are good-looking, and five are decidedly pretty. They wear their hair differently from their sisters in the north, who, for the most part, are content to observe the general local custom of arranging it in a chignon at the back. In Kioto a young lady takes the chignon pad, and instead of laying it flat to her head, fixes it at right angles, after which all kinds of arrangements are possible. Artificial flowers are largely used to complete the adornment of the Kioto belles' hair. In the north, except on high festive occasions, this is very rare: girls there are content with thrusting a pin through the chignon. The Kioto girl has several pins, in addition to a gaily coloured flower, wired so that it may stand an inch or two above the top-most flight of her hair.

The chignon shares with the obi the provision of opportunity to the Japanese lady to display her wealth and her taste. Any amount of money may be spent in pins for the hair. The obi is the sash with which both men and women in Japan girdle their kimono, or outward robe. It is made of silk, runs to great length, is wound twice round the waist, and in the case of ladies is made

into a stupendous bow at the back. A Japanese girl can by a glance at the obi and the value of the pins in the back hair reckon up the measure of affluence enjoyed by a lady she may pass in the street or meet in a tea-house. The obi frequently costs more than the kimono itself. Ito, from whom I have many confidences, tells me that he gave thirteen and a half yen, equal to about two pounds twelve English, for his obi, whilst his kimono only cost twelve yen. But then Ito is a man of luxurious habits in respect of his clothing.

The day after our arrival at Kioto he came out in a perfectly new suit, the coat and waistcoat of rakish homespun, calculated to give him a sporting air, and a pair of plaid trousers, which I believe he selected from his wardrobe as a delicate attention to the young gentleman from Glasgow, who is our travelling companion. These were happily saved when Ito was submerged in the bay at Yokka-ichi on our way hither. What chiefly troubles Ito's soul now is the condition of his shoes. These were bought new for this trip, and were much admired in the seductive hour of calm weather when we were steaming through the waters of Yokohama Bay into the stormy Pacific. When he went under water his shoes of course went with him. On landing at Yokka-ichi he gave them to one of the maidens to dry. She seems to have taken the surest means to that end by putting them in the hibaichi, where a hole was burned clean through the sole. Ito, who, since we set forth on our journey, has received with calm resignation the news of the burning of his house and the imminent escape of his 'modder,' who has scarcely murmured against the evil fate which, having first tried him with fire, whelmed him in water, is sorely taxed by this disaster to his shoe. As we were taking our boots off before entering the ancient temple of Hishi Hon-Gwan, I saw Ito gazing forlornly at the cruel wound in his sole.

The streets in Kioto, with the exception of one or two thoroughfares crossing the city, are curiously narrow. Passing through some lanes in a jinricksha, it would have been almost possible to sit in the middle of the road and help yourself from the stores displayed in the shops on either hand. The buildings are very low, so much so that, glancing down their lengths, it seems as if they were all one story high. This, however, is not the case, as on entering there is invariably found a low ceiled suite of rooms up a steep staircase. All the roofs are deeply

gabled, there not being a straight line anywhere in view. In the bright sunlight and under the blue sky arched over the city even in these November days, the streets are full of pleasant pictures. At night, when Chinese lanterns hang from shop fronts, and others go twinkling through the throng pendant on the right-hand shaft of the jinricksha, it looks like a scene taken from a superlatively well-appointed stage.

I had heard in Yokohama that everything was very dear at Kioto, but that does not tally with my experience. I know that among other investments I paid a halfpenny to visit a Zoological Garden, and an uncommonly good collection it was. The yard which contained it backed into the surrounding houses, which though perhaps objectionable on sanitary grounds, supplied opportunity to the residents for gratuitous observation on the mincing ways of the owl, the lofty manners of the hawk, and the indolence of the young alligator. Also they could hear through the livelong day the momentarily repeated lesson of the parrot, as it was taken in the proprietor's hand. The show was 'run' by a family who divided the labour, one taking money at the gate, another stirring up the monkey, a third making the parrot talk, and others showing round generally the constant stream of visitors.

Kioto is full of shops for the sale of lacquer-work, china, and bronzes. These are worth visiting; but I like better to stroll through the shops of the secondhand dealers, where all kinds of miscellaneous articles are stored, and now and then something worth picking up is discovered. The rain which came down in torrents yesterday has passed off, and the many colours which fill the streets are shining under the summer sun. The storm passed away last night with a sunset of singular beauty; scarcely any crimson in the sky, only the west suffused with rich golden light. The morning view from the Yaami Hotel is very beautiful. The hotel stands well up on a hill embowered in trees. In the valley beneath, almost hidden under a veil of white mist, lies the town. Beyond it is a thicker cloud of mist through which rise the tops of hills, just beginning to glow in the new-born sunlight. Whilst the mist still lies closely over the town, hiding all trace of human habitation, it seems as if we had gone back to primeval times, when water filled the valley and the silent hills looked down upon the solitary lake.

The Mikado's palace, one of the principal attractions for the foreigner in Kioto, is now closed to the public, and according to

the present intentions of the authorities, will not be reopened. We were favoured by a special dispensation, and had full opportunity of wandering through the palace. The residence stands within an area of twenty-six acres, intruders being kept off by a thick roofed wall of earth and plaster. There are six massive gates, against which a mob unprovided with artillery might thunder in vain. Inside is a vast gravelled area, its bareness broken here and there by a few trees. Standing within the enclosure we could see nothing of the town, the horizon above the height of the wall being broken only by the green hills that girdle it. A European gardener would make a perfect paradise of the place, with springy turf, fountains, and flower-beds. But Japanese gardening runs largely to gravel, and where we have green refreshing lawns he has barren stretches of gravel or soil beaten hard.

On approaching the first room of the palace we were required to take off our boots, a ceremony preliminary to entering any building, from a tea-house to a temple. Sometimes, in respect of the temples, the game has turned out to be not worth the slipper. There was quite a posse of attendants detached to accompany us through the palace, where one intelligent man would have done equally well. They were attired in ordinary Japanese dress, though I dare say on festive occasions they proudly produce a rumpled suit of black broadcloth and a pair of white cotton gloves, such as their colleagues wore at the review on the Mikado's birthday, and such as undertakers wear in England. I do not know why they should have been present in such numbers, but it was evidently not with the intention of making themselves useful. The governor of Kioto had politely sent one of his secretaries to accompany us through the palace. This gentleman, with the excessive courtesy of the Japanese, would not allow us to carry our own boots. In such case it seemed not improbable that some of the able-bodied servants who followed us about might carry a pair. But that was not an idea that occurred to them, and pleasurable contemplation of the works of art in the palace was disturbed by repeatedly coming upon the Governor's secretary taking short cuts with four pairs of boots under his arm.

We entered by a suite of apartments in which the Daimios seeking audience of the Mikado were wont to assemble. There is a series of apartments known as the Chrysanthemum room, the

Stork room, and the Tiger room, in reference to the subjects treated on the panels of the sliding walls. Unlike the residences of some sovereigns which the public are privileged to gaze upon, here are no mighty four-post bedsteads, no full-bottomed chairs, no tapestry, no carpets nor hangings, no portraits of ancestors, nothing but the bare room, with its thickly-matted floor, its artistically-decorated walls, and its ceiling always of beautiful wood. The absence of paint in their dwelling-houses compels the Japanese to seek colour and variety in the grain of various woods, and within their own country they find a rich field.

The throne-room, reached from the waiting-rooms by a corridor, is a long bare apartment with a canopied chair set near the centre. The chair is lacquered and richly inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The canopy consists of white silk trimmed with a deep border of reddish-brown. At first sight it looks like chintz. As the attendants entered, they all bowed low to the empty throne, repeating the obeisance whenever they passed or approached it. In this room the new Mikado is solemnly enthroned, and here, through successive New Year's days, a long line of Mikados, now sleeping in the dust, have given audience to peers of the realm. It is not actually the same room, since the Palace has more than once been destroyed by fire. But it is built up again as nearly as possible a copy of the old one, with the same provision for ceremonial. Immediately facing the throne is a courtyard, access to which is gained by eighteen steps. These correspond with the grades into which the Imperial officials are divided. Those who have not reached the dignity of being allowed to stand on the lowest step are known as *fi-ge*, or 'down on the earth.'

A wall at the back of the throne is divided into panels, each containing four portraits of Chinese sages. Above these hang two excellent oil portraits of the Mikado and the Empress. It must not be supposed that either sacred personage went through the process of 'sitting' for the vulgar artist. But even a Mikado may, without suffering in his dignity, hold communication with the sun. This conceded, the illustrious pair were photographed, and from the photograph an able artist in Milan evolved the oil paintings. We had been permitted to walk at will over the throne-room, but when we came to a suite of private apartments called the *Ko-go-sho*, one of the attendants was found to have sufficient energy to forbid entrance. We might walk about the verandah and look in at the beautifully painted panels, but the

tread of a foreigner, albeit bootless, must not desecrate the floor. This suite of rooms faced a pretty garden with maple trees glowing in reds and yellows, and a mossgrown stone bridge spanning a fish-pond.

The On-mi-ma, 'august three rooms,' is that portion of the palace where the Mikado was wont to watch the performance of the *No* players. This place is marked by a dais, raised six inches from the ground, on which the Mikado sits. The stage is some distance off, and, as now, when not in use is cut off from the Imperial apartments by a wooden hoarding. Amongst the decorations of this room is a wonderful group of horses, drawn with their heads and tails down, and their legs stiffly pendant, in the attitude a horse falls into when it is being lowered into the hold of a ship with a band round its belly. Japanese artists are great in birds and flowers, but they ludicrously fail when they come to draw any kind of animal.

The Sei-rio-den is used chiefly for levees. In one of the rooms a corner of the floor is strewn every morning with earth, so that the Mikado may worship his ancestors without descending to the ground. Except for the panels, some of the ceilings, and the beautiful wood used for doors and screens, there is not much to attract in the palace. But it is impossible to turn in any direction without being confronted with evidence of the reverence with which the person of the Mikado was regarded, even during the long period when he was practically a prisoner of state, a crowned puppet of the Shoguns. Sovereigns in western states are more or less servilely approached as human beings placed on lofty pedestals. The Mikado was, and in considerable measure yet is, more than a human being. His office was of heavenly ordination; and he is descended through a long line of personages who figure in the popular mythology. How long this will last it might not be friendly to inquire. But, undoubtedly, the most suicidal blow the Mikado has struck at his own mystic authority fell when he signed the degree of compulsory national education.

THE LOG HUT OF CLAPHAM.



F all the suburbs south of the Thames, Clapham has the appearance of the most homogeneous prosperity. Its ways are broad and open, its houses substantial and well-kept. An air of comfortable competence is to be found in its quietest nooks, while the splendour of City riches shines on its more conspicuous squares and roads and terraces. The Common is its glory, the crown of its affluence. To live on Clapham Common means an obliging banker, efficient servants, gallant horses, and no more personal knowledge of bankruptcy than a

Kaffir has of æstheticism.

Of all the houses on Clapham Common the most spacious is the Log Hut. It stands with four fair walls against the four lights of heaven. The exterior aspect is large and free; responsible without pretentiousness; comfortable without sordidness; liberal without prodigality.

The interior more than confirms the outward promise. In summer it is full of subdued sunlight, and open to the wandering perfumes of the gardens beyond. It is still without being hushed. The silence seems always either brooding over music fled, or awaiting melody. Sounds which abroad strike harshly upon the ear come mingled with a murmur of leaves, and are no more than the stray, full-bodied notes of an incomplete tune.

In winter huge fires blaze for welcome. The silver shines,

the pictures gleam, the drapery grows mellow, the carpets catch the warmth, the ceiling throws down the glow of the ruddy light. Soft chairs and couches woo the stranger to repose, and importune him to delay.

The master of this house, Mr. William Bayliss, had just reached that period of life when, fortune having favoured him, and he being untroubled by any later growth of ambition, he was little disposed for new enterprise, and made up his mind to live what might be yet given to him of life in all the peacefulness of moderate use. He was sixty years of age.

Mr. Bayliss was a man of rather more than the middle height. His figure was but slightly stouter than forty years ago. He had large kindly blue eyes, a broad unwrinkled forehead, and, save where a fringe of grey hair ran round the lower part of his head, he was quite bald. He did not wear whiskers, beard, or moustache. In youth he had been good-looking. In age he had a singularly gracious benevolent face.

Mrs. Bayliss, five years his junior, and married to him thirty years ago, reflected many of the leading characteristics of his expression. She had been his good wife all that time. She believed there was no better man than he in all the world.

To this good couple one daughter had been born. Kate was her name. And now this day, in the middle of leafy June, Kate was to be married. She was to marry Edward Mayne, the choice of her own heart, the only sweetheart of her girlhood, and the suitor who had won the love and respect of her father and mother.

Kate was twenty-two, tall and lithe, had dark eyes and a round red cheek, and red lips, and dark-brown hair, with here and there flaws of lighter brown that made rich gold of the sunlight. She smiled oftener than laughed, but when she did laugh there was such a tone of exquisite enjoyment that people paused to listen as we hush our rude voices when, unawares, we are startled by the lark.

Edward Mayne was a jovial, light-hearted fellow, tall too, flat-chested, lightly built and lithe, with animal spirits enough for a parish, good heart enough for a county, and as much good sense as you would like to see in any fine, handsome, dashing young fellow of seven-and-twenty. Although he had not been up to this at all blameless, he was, everyone said who knew him well, of the best kind of raw material from which the best kind of Englishman is made.

When all the oratorical formalities of the breakfast had been complied with, and yet an hour was to spare before the bride and bridegroom set out upon their honeymoon, the master of the house rose and said :—

‘There is just time before the young people leave us for a little story, which has been a blameless secret between my wife and me for many a year. Some of you are old friends, yet I think the memory of none of you reaches back to the circumstance which caused me to call this house the Log Hut.

‘It has been my good fortune—good fortune for which I am ever grateful to heaven—that having begun life with a modest education and no fortune, I have arrived, towards the close of my years, at a position of comfort, nay, moderate affluence.

‘I began life in the city of London, in the office of a large timber firm. At sixteen I entered the office, and, until I was close upon twenty, was occupied in the ordinary routine of the counting-house. I never cared much for desk work, and I was glad of the opportunity of leaving my desk and taking a position in our great timber-yard. Here was a life of physical activity, in which I found scope for judgment; at the office I had done merely mechanical work.

‘Marston and Co. bought and sold wood of all kinds: Swedish, North American, West Indian, British African. I quickly became master of my business. I liked it; and liking in business is more than half the battle. I need not go into technical detail, it will be enough if I say that when I reached five-and-twenty years of age I was one of the best judges of logs in London. To those who know nothing of the business it may seem that little or no skill is required in selecting timber. But when we come to consider the wide difference of prices of fancy wood of the same kind, the value of an expert will appear.

‘At this time I had a salary which will appear, while sufficient to keep a bachelor in a homely way, was altogether inadequate to the support of a wife and family. But—’ here he leaned with a pleasant gentle courtesy towards his wife, ‘I had made up my mind who my wife should be if ever I married. Out of my small salary I was able to lay by a little money. We used to call this her dowry’—here he bowed again in the direction of his wife—‘for she was an orphan alone in the world, and kept herself on her slender earnings as a schoolmistress.

‘Three or four sons of members of the firm were in the

business, so that I, being without capital, had little or no chance of ever attaining to a partnership. There were, of course, men with much larger salaries than my own, but they were older by twenty years, and waiting for dead men's shoes is bad work. I plainly saw that marriage was for me out of the question as long as I stayed with Marston and Co. Accordingly, when I was about six-and-twenty, and had saved close upon a hundred pounds, I went to the head of the firm and explained my case. I told him I felt, as far as the business and the treatment I received went, perfectly satisfied, but that I was anxious to push my fortune so that I might settle in life. Old Mr. Marston was extremely kind. He told me they were greatly pleased with me, and that they would do anything in reason rather than let me go, but that certain infrangible conditions of promotion existed that I could not be put over the head of my seniors, and that although he was willing to increase my salary to the utmost limit—consistent with my services—he could not on any account overstep the limit. I explained that the increase he offered would not meet my views, and that I had determined to leave as soon as a substitute for me was supplied.

‘Mr. Marston then asked me what I proposed doing. I remember, as though it was but yesterday, the mixture of pride and humiliation I felt when I told him that I intended starting in business for myself.

“May I ask,” he said, “what business you purpose starting in?”

“Something the same as I have been at,” I said, feeling still more uncomfortable.

“Oh!” he cried with a smile, “you are going to be a rival of ours?”

“No, no!” I hastened to say. “I intend buying and selling on commission, and I wish to know, sir, if I may count on you as one of my patrons.”

“You may count on me,” said he, cordially, “doing all for you I may fairly do. Young Bayliss,” he added gravely, “if you want a hundred or two, you have but to say the word. You can pay me back just as you please.”

‘I thanked him most sincerely, and told him that for my present purposes I wanted little or no capital, except just what would keep me going until I had got my scheme into operation.

“And,” he said, “may I ask what exactly is your scheme?”

"Well, sir," I said, "I imagine I am a good judge of fancy logs—"

"So they tell me, so they tell me," said he, "and that is the reason we are sorry to lose you."

"And my notion is, that if I go about here and there I may be able to find logs which the owners want to sell and which my judgment tells me are good value for the money asked. And, sir, when I asked you to help me with your patronage I meant that supposing I came across a piece of timber which I believed would cut up well, would you buy upon my judgment and so put the commission for the sale in my way?"

"A very good idea for you indeed," said the old man. "A very good notion indeed. I understand you have made no mistakes up to this, and I have no doubt that we shall be able to do a good deal with you. Of course, you know all things of that kind must be done through Mr. Watkins, the master of the yard."

"I have already spoken to Mr. Watkins, sir, and he says that, with your permission, he will be glad to help me."

'In a month I left Marston and Co., and found myself free to do as I pleased, and with about eighty pounds in my pocket. It so happened that the first day of my liberty, and the first day of the Easter vacation, were the same. I thought that, after ten years' close application to business, I owed myself a little holiday, and therefore I went to Jane and told her I had determined to do nothing until the vacation was over. I often look back to those first days of independence, and think that in them began the great happiness and prosperity which has seemed to increase, hour by hour, ever since.

'When Jane's school re-opened, I went to work with all the vigour of hope and determination. For the first year I was moderately successful. I sold to Mr. Marston several pieces which turned out to his satisfaction, but at the end of the twelve months my financial position had not improved. I had made no more money than if I had remained in the yard. I felt sobered, but not discouraged. I was seven-and-twenty, Jane two-and-twenty, and I thought it time we married, but I could not conscientiously ask her to share my small and now uncertain income, and I had determined from the beginning that she should give up school-teaching when she became my wife.

'At this time the art of veneering was perhaps at its height, and for the benefit of anyone here who knows nothing of that art,

I may say it is simply that of covering what I may call base wood with what I may call precious wood. Logs of mahogany, walnut, satinwood, rosewood, and so on, are cut into thin leaves about the eighth of an inch thick, and glued down on base wood. In the process of cutting, half the wood is lost; but supposing an inch thickness is required, you can have, at the expense of a quarter of an inch of mahogany and seven-eighths of an inch of common wood, what seems to be inch mahogany. Quarter of an inch and seven-eighths of an inch would be, of course, an inch and an eighth, but the odd eighth flies from the circular saw in mahogany sawdust.

‘It was in selecting logs which might be profitably cut into veneer, I attracted attention at Marston’s yard. It was on my judgment in this matter I started in life on my own account. My plan was simple. I wandered from place to place, from sale to sale, from yard to yard, spying out likely-looking pieces and bringing news of them to manufacturers.

‘In the course of my wanderings I naturally came into contact with men employed in nearly every wholesale timber-yard in London. Among these was a working man named John Fraser, who had always struck me as one possessed of a shrewd knowledge of timber. As with me, he could give no reason for the conclusions at which he arrived. He simply said, “I like it” or “I don’t,” “Buy it” or “let it alone;” “I think it will turn out well,” or “I am sure it is no good.”

‘I cannot explain how it was, but I felt drawn towards this man Fraser, and whenever I went to where he was employed, I made it a point to meet him and have a chat. It will not seem like boasting on my part if I say I was a better judge of logs than he. It is the simple truth. In my experience he rarely hesitated, and was, I may say, never wrong. He was not often astray, but on many occasions he would decline to give an opinion any way, merely saying the thing was beyond him.

‘One wet, dull, miserable forenoon in February I went into the yard where Fraser was employed. I had nothing to do that day. I knew no fresh consignment had reached that yard since my last visit. I felt depressed, discouraged. The present year had not opened even as well for me as the former one. I began to think Jane and I would have indeed very long to wait before we could start, ever so modestly, our little home. I found Fraser sitting idly on some square Quebec timber. Because of his

judgment in logs Fraser was allowed great latitude in laziness. In fact he was retained almost wholly for the purpose of appraising uncut wood. He was in a peculiarly morose and taciturn humour. I could get nothing out of him but negatives: It was not a nice day: There was no news: Nothing had arrived since I was there last: It did not seem as if the seasons were now as they had been long ago: Two large timber firms had not been able to pay their way and were bankrupt: There was no knowing but that his own firm was in a bad way: It was now pretty sure that



the end of the world could not be far off: He had no faith in his own judgment of logs, and he began to doubt mine.

‘At last he said to me, “I know there isn’t a better judge of stuff in the rough than you, although you are a young man, but wait till you come to my years, and maybe you’ll fancy your own opinion less.”

“Perhaps I may,” said I; “but so far as I have gone I have never made a very bad guess yet.”

“Ay, ay, ay—youth is ever overbold. When I was your age maybe *I* too thought I couldn’t be taken in. But ’tis wonderful

how we lose courage as we grow old. You give an opinion twice as readily as I who have had five times your experience. Tell me," he cried with sudden animation, "were you ever downright beaten by a log yet?"

"Never," I answered, with a laugh. "I daresay I have not been long enough at the business."

"Would you like to be beaten?" he said, getting up, and infusing what was for him a great deal of animation into his movements.

"If you've got anything in stock you think will beat me," I said, "let me see it."

"Come," he said defiantly, and without another word he led the way to a remote corner of the yard where I had never been before.

I followed in silence. In a couple of minutes we stood opposite a piece of mahogany.

"Eighteen feet by three feet, by three feet," he said. "What do you make of it?"

I looked long and narrowly. There was absolutely no indication of promise in the wood, and yet I felt an uneasy desire to come by that log in some way or another. Not only was there no appearance of promise, but it looked uncouth, ungainly, and certainly a superficial glance would induce any average buyer to pass it over. However it was, the longer I looked the less I liked to leave it there. Something drew me towards it, but whether it was the fascination of attraction or the fascination of repulsion which chained me to the spot, I could not decide.

"Do you know the price they are asking for it?" I said.

"Three hundred," he answered laconically.

"I'll go see Mr. Watkins about it."

"Yes," he said in a jealous tone. "But what do *you* think of it?"

"I really don't know," I answered in perplexity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed in triumph. "I told you I'd show you something beyond you. Why, that log has been in stock these six years, and no one will look at it."

"I'll bring Mr. Watkins this very day," I answered, and in a few more minutes was out of the yard.

That afternoon the manager of Marston and Co. and I went back to Fraser.

"Well," said the manager, "Bayliss, I thought you had some gumption until now. Why, it wouldn't pay for the saw. I

wouldn't take a gift of it. I wouldn't pay the carriage of it to our place. It's a regular weed."

"I own I was greatly discouraged, but I was more disturbed than discouraged. I could not get out of my mind that there was some secret hidden in that log. I lay awake half the night thinking of it. When I slept I dreamed that Marston and Co. bought it on my recommendation, that it turned out badly, and that my old employers told me they would have nothing further to do with me, and bade me good-bye for ever. Next morning, when I awoke, I was still more unsettled in my mind than I had been the previous evening. I need not say I attached no importance to my dream. But still my dream helped me to one determination. I resolved not to urge the purchase of the mahogany upon Marston and Co. Then, after long and careful thought, I made up my mind as to the course I should adopt. I went to the City and sought my old employer. I said to him:—

"When I was leaving you, sir, more than a year ago, you were kind enough to say you would lend me one or two hundred pounds if I wanted it to start me in business. If you have the same confidence in me now as you had then, I would feel very much obliged to you indeed for a loan of the money."

"The old man pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, and looked at me for a moment in silence. "Bayliss, I have just the same confidence in you as ever. You can have the money, with pleasure." Then readjusting his spectacles, he continued. "To show how much I trust you, and believe in you, I will not even ask you what you intend doing with the money. Wait a moment." He took out a cheque-book, filled a cheque up for two hundred pounds, and handed it to me.

"My eyes filled with tears of gratitude at the kindly act of this good old man, and for a moment or two I could not trust myself to speak. As soon as I was somewhat sure of the steadiness of my voice, I said, "I cannot thank you sufficiently, sir. I will not try. I hope you may never be sorry for this, and I hope you may never be ashamed of me."

"I am sure I shall not, my dear Bayliss; I am sure I shall not," he said, with generous good nature.

"It is only fair, sir, that I should now tell you," I said, "that I want this money for my first speculation. I intend buying a log with it and some of my own savings."

"Ah!" he laughed, "I told you it would come to your rival-

ling us in the end. Now that you have told me so much, tell me a little more. Why are not we to buy this log?"

"Because, sir, it is the only one in my experience I ever was doubtful about, and I could not think of allowing you, after all your kindnesses to me, to run any risk. And now, sir, I have to ask you for an additional favour. Will you allow that log to be cut for me in your yard?"

"Mr. Marston said he would be happy to do so, and I went away with a sense of heavy responsibility, and gratitude too deep for words.

"That day I bought the unpromising piece of timber for two hundred and sixty-five pounds, and the next day it was in Marston's yard in front of the great circular eighteen-foot saw.

"Watkins could scarcely restrain his laughter, and I really believe that, but for the sake of old friendship, he would have treated me with open scorn. But at the bottom of his rough nature there was a good deal of kindness which he took great care to conceal. So that after the first surprise at my purchase he tried rather to encourage than depress me, and said that perhaps the log would not prove so badly as he had supposed. "And you know," he said, "in any case we shall be able to let you have at least half your money for the stuff when it is cut up. However queer it may turn out, we can either work it up ourselves or sell it."

"At last the great saw was started, and Watkins and I stood by to watch the result. The first and second leaf came off, and discovered nothing but a dark centre line running down the whole length. The third showed a thickening and blurring of this line. The fourth was broader, and still more blurred. The same characteristic appeared increased in the fifth. The sixth and seventh revealed the markings broadening and assuming something like a definite shape. At the eighth the grain took a sharper outline. We were now two inches into the wood.

"Two sixty-five you gave for it," said Watkins. "Come, I don't like to see you lose your money. That is half it, I mean. I'll give you two hundred for the log."

"I shook my head and said, "No. Go on." I felt excited. My misgivings were fading away, and I began to have a tremulous anticipation of triumph. We went on for another inch. Now there could be no doubt. A regular pattern was gradually unfolding itself.

"I'll give you three hundred for it," said Watkins.

"No," I cried. "I'll keep my luck, good or bad."

'At that time I felt my future was in the balance. If, as we went on, the pattern now indicated increased, the leaves would be worth a small fortune. As it was, and supposing the pattern did not develop, the wood was of much more value than the money I had given for it.

'At this point someone called Watkins away, and he did not return until six inches had been cut into leaves. I was now in a state of tumultuous excitement. Not only had what I may call the design expanded and taken sharper outline, but there could be no longer any doubt that the baulk was, in my regard, a benignant freak of nature. For it revealed what, in lieu of any other way of expressing it, I may call a decorative treatment of the acanthus leaf. This appeared in about three-fourths of the entire length of the grain, beginning about an eighth from one end and ending about an eighth from the other.

"What do you think of it now?" I cried triumphantly to Watkins.

"It's wonderful," he said. "It's the finest thing of the kind I ever saw. Come, I'll give you twice what you paid. What do you say? It isn't every day you get a chance of making two hundred and sixty-five pounds on one transaction."

"I'll keep my luck," I cried. "I'll keep it, however it may turn out."

'Watkins once more went away. I was in too great a fever of excitement to heed his action, but afterwards I learned he then sent a messenger for Mr. Marston. In a short time the old man came briskly into the yard.

"So, young Bayliss," he said, "I hear you have had a wonderful stroke of luck with that log. Oh!" he cried, enthusiastically, "it's a beauty! Upon my life, it is a beauty! Will you sell it as it stands?"

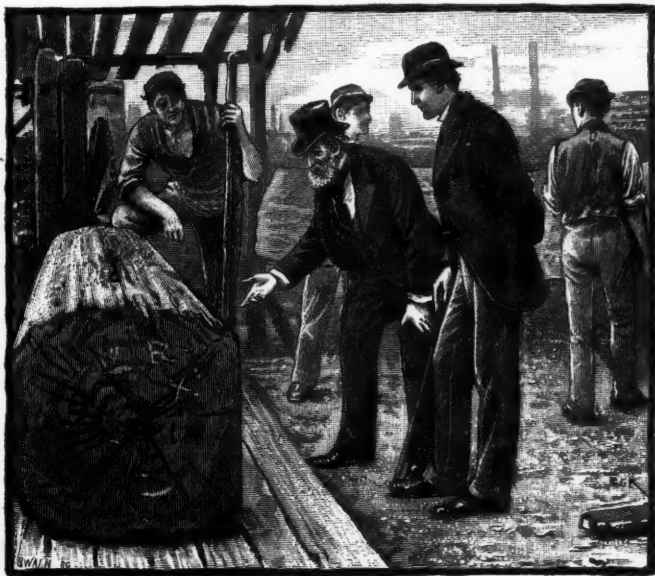
'I shook my head.' "Mr. Watkins has been good enough," I answered, "to offer me five hundred and thirty, double what I gave for it, but I'd rather not take the money, sir, if you don't mind."

"Pooh!" cried the old man, "I'll make it seven hundred and fifty. Eh? Will you take seven hundred and fifty?"

'By this time we had got a third through, and leaf by leaf the pattern had grown in diameter and richness of design. For a

moment I wavered. Here was a chance of making four hundred and eighty-five pounds without any risk whatever. Yet still I was loth to part with that log. I said to myself after a moment's struggle, "Sink or swim, I will keep it." Then aloud: "As soon as it is all cut you shall have it if you like, at what you may consider a fair price?"

'I will not trouble you with any further details beyond telling you that cutting after cutting added to the value of my purchase, and that by the time the great saw passed through that wood



finally, Mr. Marston had said to me, "It is worth every penny of fifteen hundred pounds, and you can have fifteen hundred pounds for it if that will satisfy you."

'I closed with the old man there and then, hurried out of the yard, and taking a cab, drove straight with the news to Jane.

'That was the beginning of my good fortune. The next and greatest good luck that came to me was my wife. Since we were married we have prospered beyond my most ardent hopes of the olden time. I have always regarded that mahogany log as the

basis of my fortune, the foundation of my success. It has helped me to the building of this house, which out of gratitude to it I have called the Log Hut. You may have observed that among the presents which kind friends have poured in upon Kate, my daughter, on this occasion, there was none from me. I have kept this story until now in order to give point to my wedding gift. The carriage is at the door, but before the young people set out, accompanied by the good wishes of all, I think it only right they should know that the present I intend for them upon the occasion of their marriage, is the Log Hut of Clapham.'



